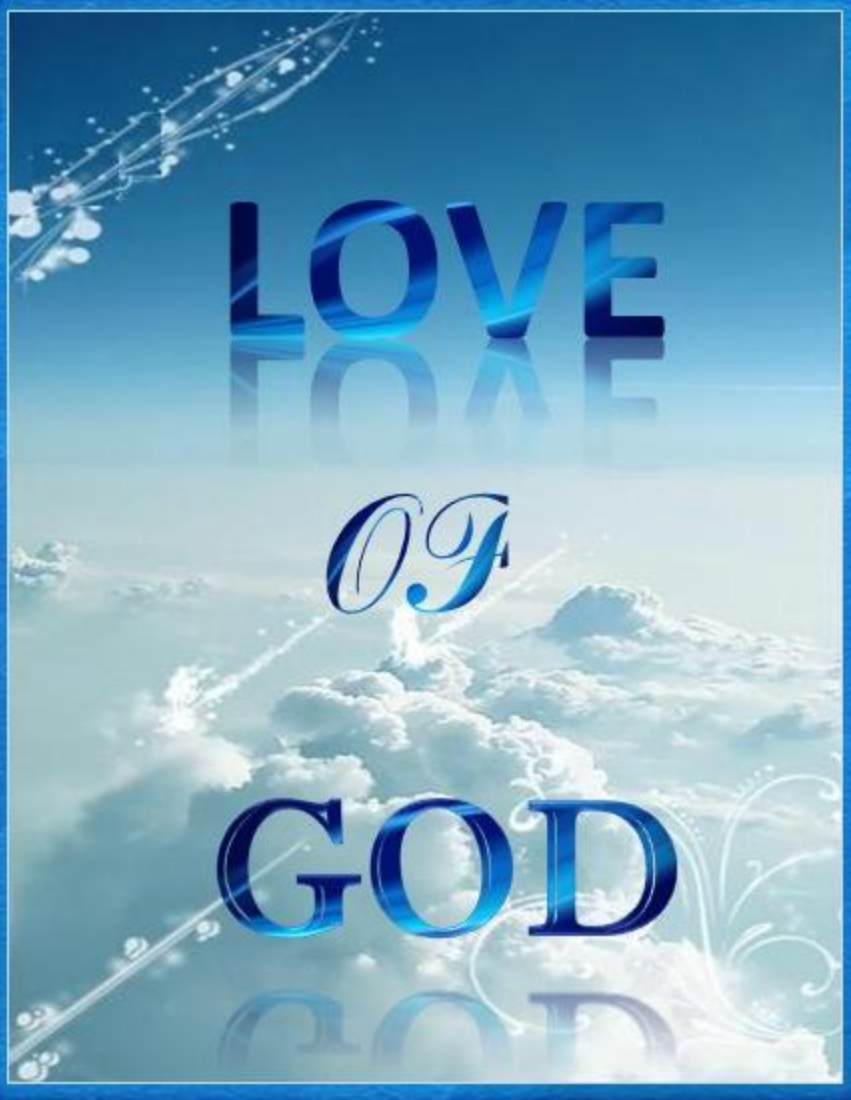
The Virtue of



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The Virtue of
LOVE OF GOD

A Comparative Approach to

The Virtue of
LOVE OF GOD

A Mystical Analysis on
Islamic and Christian Moral Theologies

Dr. S. M. R. Hejazi, H.I.M.

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Book Title: **A Comparative Approach to *The Virtue of Love of God***

A Mystical Analysis on Islamic and Christian Moral Theology

Authored by: Sayyed Mohammad Reza Hejazi, Ph.D.; H.I.M.

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The Book: This book presents a comparative approach to the virtue of 'Love of God'; it is a mystical analysis based on Islamic and Christian moral theologies. This study provides an exposition and comparative analysis of Kashani's (1598-1680) and Malebranche's (1638-1715) conception of virtue, with particular attention paid to the role of love of God. One of the main goals of this research is to develop an understanding of the notion of love of God within the philosophical and mystical contexts of two different thinkers, each from a particular traditional horizon. This entails explicating each thinker's understanding of this concept within his specific line of thought in Islam or Christianity, and then situating his view within a broader philosophical and mystical perspective.

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In The Name of Allah

The Most Compassinate, The Most Merciful

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CONSONANTS

	Arabic	Persian			Arabic	Persian
ء	‘	‘		ص	S	S
ب	B	B		ض	D	Z
پ	-	P		ط	T	T
ت	T	T		ظ	Z	Z
ث	TH	TH		ع	‘	‘
ج	J	J		غ	GH	GH
چ	-	CH		ف	F	F
ح	H	H		ق	Q	Q
خ	KH	KH		ک	K	K
د	D	D		گ	-	G
ذ	DH	DH		ل	L	L
ر	R	R		م	M	M
ز	Z	Z		ن	N	N
ژ	-	ZH		و	W	V/U
س	S	S		ه	H	H
ش	SH	SH		ی	Y	Y

VOWELS

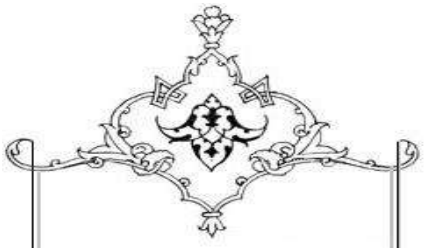
long	ا	**ā**
	آ	**Ā**
	و	**ū**
	ی	**ī**
Doubled	ی	**īy or iyy (final form ī)**
	و	**uww (final form ū), uvv (for Persian)**
Diphthongs	و	**au or aw**
	ی	**ai or ay**
Short	ـَ	**a**
	ـُ	**u**
	ـِ	**i**

Chronological Index

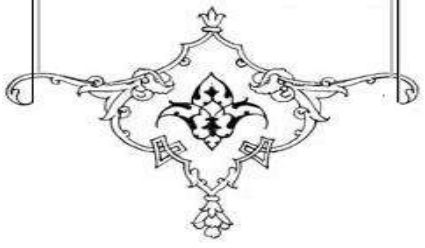
Socrates	470 BC	--	400 BC
Plato	428 BC	--	348 BC
Aristotle	384 BC	--	322 BC
Epicurus	341 BC	--	270 BC
Plotinus	204 AD	--	270 AD
Augustine, Saint	354	--	430
Fārābī, Abu Nasr	870	--	950
Ibn Sīnā, Abu ‘Ali	980	--	1037
Miskawayh		--	1030
Ghazālī, Abu Hāmid	1058	--	1111
Suhrawardī		--	1191
Ibn `Arabī	1164	--	1240
Rūmī, Jalāl al-Dīn	1207	--	1273
Tūsī, Nasīr al-Dīn	1201	--	1274
Aquinas, Thomas	1225	--	1274
Mullā Sadrā Shīrāzī	1571	--	1640
Descartes, Rene	1596	--	1650
Spinoza, Baruch	1632	--	1677
Hobbes, Thomas	1588	--	1679
Kāshānī, Mullā Muhsin Fayd	1598	--	1680
Locke, John	1632	--	1704
Malebranche, Nicholas	1638	--	1715
Leibniz	1646	--	1716
Berkeley	1685	--	1753
Hume, David	1711	--	1776
Kant	1724	--	1804
Kierkegaard	1813	--	1855
Moor, G. E.	1873	--	1958

Abbreviations

MB	**Kāshānī,** *al-Mahajjah al-Baydā' fī Ihyā` al-Ihyā'*
KM	**Kāshānī,** *Kalimāt Maknūna min 'Ulūm-i Ahl al-hikmh wa`l-Ma`rifa*
HM	**Kāshānī,** *al-Haqā'iq fī Mahāsin al-Akhlāq*
UM	**Kāshānī,** *Usūl al-Ma`ārif*
TE	**Malebranche,** *Treatise on Ethics*
TN	**Malebranche**, *Treatise on Nature and Grace*
ST	**Malebranche**, *The Search After Truth*
ES	**Malebranche,** *Elucidations of the Search After Truth*
SU	**Aquinas,** *Summa Theologica*
EN	**Plotinus,** *Enneads*
NE	**Aristotle,** *The Nicomachean Ethics*



INTRODUCTION



Introduction

In the study of religious ethics, major moral systems are often categorized as either theories of virtue or theories of obligation (duty). These two types of ethical theories differ in their methodological premises, their historical antecedents, and their philosophical expression. While the post-Kantian modern age has been characterized by the dominance of moral systems emphasizing the centrality of obligation, recent years have seen a renewed interest in theory of virtue. This movement has brought with it an interest in exploring and recovering historical expositions of the notion of virtue in religious and non-religious thinkers alike. Two obvious areas for such investigation are traditional Christian and Islamic thought, both of which have relied prominently upon virtue-based moralities. Within these respective traditions, two very significant contemporary theorists of virtue are the French philosopher and theologian Malebranche and his Persian counterpart Kāshānī.

The central point looked for here is the exploration of a cross-cultural understanding through looking for sameness in difference and difference in sameness. This multicultural interdisciplinary elaboration, besides the advantages Yearley examined in his well-done comparative work,[1] deserves a scholarly cultural confidence for the entire system of human thought. I believe that on the one hand this security creates an intellectual confidence by which humanity today, in the time of post-modernity, would be able to disperse the clouds of skepticism which are covering and darkening the horizons of cultures and religions. On the other hand, the intellectual security conferred by this kind of cross-cultural and cross-religious understanding offers a superior means for securing the whole world in certain climates, i.e. moral, political and

social, to the extent that it provides a reliable substructure for any further civilizing development, and demands a coherent and cooperative multicultural dialogue.

The survey is developed by approaching a particular comparative exercise, noting the methodological problems it contains and the ways we may confront these problems. Within the history of philosophy, theology and cross-cultural anthropology, two thinkers "Kāshānī and Malebranche" each of whom develops and effectively shapes a culture's view of his world, are chosen. Within the thought of these philosophers, the theory of virtue is chosen, because this part of a moral system is presumed to be persuasive in accurate practical insights. This specific ethical exploration also provides profound insights into such thinkers' way of examining a significant area of human experience. Besides a general study of their theories of virtue, it is preferred to focus on one specific, but crucial, virtue, namely the virtue of love of God, since these thinkers aptly insist throughout their writings, the virtue of love of God, as the central and initial virtue, plays a crucial role in their entire moral system.

Mullā Muhsin Fayd Kāshānī (1598-1680) was born in Kāshān, Iran. He studied philosophy, theology and mysticism, and became a well-known Muslim scholar in his time. His philosophical thought, which follows that of Mullā Sadrā Shīrāzī, was influenced by Aristotelianism as well as Neo-Platonism. In his major work on ethics (*al-Mahajjah al-Baydā'*) Kāshānī developed his virtue-based theory and maintained that the virtue of love of Allah (God) is the basis of all moral virtues.

Nicolas Malebranche (1638-1715) was born in Paris. He studied philosophy and theology there, and became a Catholic priest in 1664. After discovering Descartes` thought, he devoted himself primarily to philosophy. He founded his theological and ethical system on the basis of an ontological and epistemological philosophy influenced by Cartesianism. His theory of knowledge, doctrine of occasionalism, model of dualism of body and soul, and conception of

values helped provide the foundation for an ethical-psychological system which is based on the virtue of love. In his *Treatise on Ethics* in particular, Malebranche elaborated the idea that love of God constitutes the primary ground for morality.

Kāshānī and Malebranche share several important features. Each occupies a position as a mediator within his respective tradition in the confrontation between tradition and modernity. Each integrates his theory of virtue within a broader philosophical system, linking moral psychology and ethics with ontology, logic, and epistemology. Most significantly, both root their ethics in the notion of love of God. Beyond their respective Islamic and Christian traditions, they have significant differences rooted in their philosophical and social backgrounds. Given these similarities and differences, a comparative study of the two thinkers has the potential not only to shed light on the philosophical concept of virtue, but also to provide a better understanding of the two faiths in the field of ethics.

This book will provide an exposition and comparative analysis of Kāshānī's and Malebranche's conception of virtue, with particular attention paid to the role of their respective notions of love of God.

The critical issue of love of God has understandably played a crucial role in human thought as a fundamental element of moral discipline and as a profoundly experiential development in spiritual life. A vast effort has been made by a large number of thinkers, Eastern and Western, ancient and modern, to explore the theory of love in several fields, but the data for this study are still incomplete. In this respect, Elizabeth Dreyer has rightly remarked that "No doubt the debate about the meaning of love and its connection to the moral and spiritual life will continue to occupy Christian people, theologians, and Church leaders in the decades ahead." [2]

Some political thinkers such as Glenn Tinder have remarked that God's sovereignty as well as love for God, and of course the Augustinian version in both cases, have largely vanished from human

minds in the modern world.[3] Nevertheless, the heart of humanity, despite the contemporary postmodern secular predicament, is experiencing a profound affinity for the illuminating brilliance of love for God in both moral and spiritual domains.

We cannot eliminate or neglect the crucial role of love from the hearts, lives, and history of human beings. It is obvious that if Divine love leaves or vanishes, it will be replaced by various earthly objects of limitless love. As Glenn Tinder rightly clarifies, "if God is dethroned, we inevitably look for other gods… If limitless love for God requires articulation, relativization, and balance in one's relation with finite realities, limitless love for a finite reality, such as a leader or a nation, relieves us of the task of thus complicating our lives."[4]

The challenge of elucidating the doctrine of love is not restricted to one or two areas; rather it has its influential presence in certain scholarly disciplines, including theology, philosophy, mysticism, and morality. Elizabeth Dreyer argues that "the challenge of taking seriously the experience, knowledge, and culture of love for contemporary women and men, and employing these data critically in our theology, is one that cannot be ignored. The profound and all-encompassing nature of love gives it a preeminent place in the Christian tradition. The genuine renewal of Church and society depends on our ability to connect all our loves with God."[5] If Dreyer is right, the doctrine of the love of God is the keystone of the future of theology, not only in the Christian tradition, but in the Islamic tradition as well.

One of the main goals of this book is to engage in the above mentioned challenge, demonstrating a two-fold fulfillment: this research will develop an understanding of the notion of love of God within the philosophical contexts of two different thinkers, each from a particular traditional horizon. This will entail explicating each thinker's understanding of this concept within his specific line of thought, namely Islam or Christianity, and then situating his view within a broader philosophical perspective.

Furthermore, this research will provide an analysis of related terminology used to structure comparisons, in order to provide a systematic means for exploring similarities and differences in specific thinkers. In applying this method, the main objective will be to illuminate and assess the respective roles played by the concept of love of God in Islamic and Christian traditions.

To achieve this ultimate goal, I have organized this book in the following order:

The first chapter has been devoted to the concept of virtue. The notion of virtue is explored semantically and historically. Moreover, its moral development, as well as its typology and divisions through the history of Western ethics, namely from the classical Greek era to the modern period,[6] have been taken into account in the first chapter.

In the second and third chapters, our two figures are the subjects of the story. Their lives, works, and thought have been briefly examined. In the same chapters, their systematic moral elaborations, which are expected to be virtue-oriented morality, are also analyzed.

Kāshānī's examination of the virtue of love of God will be carefully elaborated in the fourth chapter. First, the two key concepts, *love* and *God*, will be explored paying closer attention to Kāshānī's understanding of these concepts. Then, a brief survey of the historical development of the virtue of love of God in the history of Islamic morality will be presented. Finally, Kāshānī's understanding and interpretation of the virtue of love of God within the larger scope of his moral teachings will be critically scrutinized. The same survey will be followed in the fifth chapter with respect to Malebranche's ideas.

The critical analysis and comparative examination will be carried out in the sixth chapter. In this chapter, Kāshānī's explanation of the issue of love of God along with Malebranche's elaboration of the same issue will be compared and critically evaluated. Their intellectual background, as well as their methodological observations will be the main targets of this comparative investigation.

Finally, the conclusion, as well as the author's own observations regarding the critical features of the love of God and its crucial role in a virtue-based morality will be developed in the seventh (final) chapter.

This research demands a synthesis of certain methodological approaches. It will be relied logically on descriptive scrutiny as well as historical investigation for the comprehensive survey through the first five chapters. Furthermore, a hermeneutical exposition will be undertaken in the author's comprehension and interpretation of the technical terms, which are found mostly in chapter one through chapter five. In this regard, an understanding of Kāshānī's and Malebranche's interpretations of the notions of virtue and love of God will be first developed. Secondly, each thinker's use of these concepts within his central text by situating his moral view within his broader philosophical perspective will be critically investigated.

However, in the last two chapters, an analytical examination as well as critical comparative study will be employed. In comparing and criticizing the two writers' ethical systems the analogical reasoning of comparison advanced by Lee Yearley in his study *Mencius and Aquinas* (1990) will be drawn on. This approach builds on an analysis of the focal meanings used to structure comparisons in order to provide a systematic means of exploring similarities and differences in specific thinkers. In applying this method, the particular goal will be to illuminate and assess the respective roles played by the concept of love of God in Kāshānī's and Malebranche's virtue-based ethics.

Relying on Yearley's method, the two thinkers' similarities and differences by examining the three different types of theories: primary, practical, and secondary will be explained. To understand the real resemblances and dissimilarities, a distinction will be made between the characters and products of these three theories. In this examination, the two thinkers' successes and failures to understand the problems as well as the possibilities in their approaches will be illustrated. In fact, based on the operations of the analogical imagination, we will pursue

the similarities in the differences and the differences in the similarities. Then, we will be able to approach comparative studies through the performances that arise from examining and using analogical expressions.

It should be emphasized that the operations of the analogical thought and expression are significant when we compare theories and views of religious and/or cultural flourishing. However, in this study, we will pursue our analytical inquiry as we consider such criticisms that arise from historical or textual studies. This study will demonstrate how comparing thinkers who spring from different religions and cultures is itself a significant activity, having its own styles, criteria, and flourishing.

Inquiry and engagement such as our comparison of Kāshānī and Malebranche help us meet the challenges and opportunities of our day; and we should be able to carry out that enterprise as well as we can. Therefore, this study rests on the belief that we need a scholarly set of intellectual skills and abilities to do the comparative analysis of human flourishing. Moreover, acquiring these abilities is critical if we are to meet the historical, cultural, and religious challenges we face today.

Besides the two traditional sources, namely Islamic sources which include the Holy Qurān and the Prophetic tradition, and Christian sources which include the Holy Bible and the Evangelical tradition, modern and classical related documents are also taken into account in this research. However, the main goal of this book is the analysis of Kāshānī's philosophical and ethical works – particularly his major work on ethics, *al-Mahajjah al-Baydā'*– and Malebranche's philosophical and moral works – especially his principle work on ethics, *The Treatise on Ethics*.

It is remarkable that while a sizeable amount of literature in both French and English exists on Malebranche's philosophy, theology, and ethics, there are relatively few works in Persian and

Arabic and hardly any in English on Kāshānī. Furthermore, there has been no comparative study of these two figures, nor to my knowledge, of any other two Muslim and Christian thinkers of the same period. By engaging in such a comparison, this study will illuminate new avenues of inquiry into virtue theory and possibilities for interreligious dialogue in the field of ethics and moral theology.

Notes:

[1] Lee H. Yearley, *Mencius and Aquinas: Theories of Virtue and Conceptions of Courage*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990.

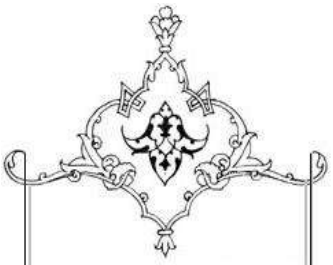
[2] See Elizabeth Dreyer, "Love," in Michael Downey, ed. *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1993), p. 622.

[3] See Glenn Tinder, "Augustine's World and Ours," *First Things*, no. 78 (December 1997), p. 37.

[4] *Ibid*.

[5] Elizabeth Dreyer, "Love," in Michael Downey, ed. *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1993), p. 622.

[6] By modern time I mean almost the beginning of seventeenth century, when a more rational tendency dominated both philosophical and theological domains. For more details, see Etienne Gilson, *Modern Philosophy, Descartes to Kant*, New York: Random House, 1963; Louis E. Loeb, *From Descartes to Hume: Continental Metaphysics and the Development of Modern Philosophy*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981.



CHAPTER ONE

Virtue: The Problem, Types, and History

CHAPTER 1

Virtue: The Problem, Types, and History

The problem of ethics[1] has been elaborated not only in the literature of moral philosophy, which is mostly examined by a rational methodology, but also in the theological context, which basically takes into account a Divine line of reflection. It is reasonable to expect that we can promote our comprehension of virtue-based morality by glancing at the historical development of the moral theory that took place in both philosophy and theology. This consideration helps us to understand the circumstances by which those developmental cases progressed, and to examine the origination of the elements which caused those historical developments. In this introductory chapter, I would like to have a look at the historical development of the virtue-based moral theory as a ground for the following chapters dealing with a comparative research between the two philosophical thinkers.

The moral theory of `virtue,`[2] in the history of Western thought, was constructed by ancient Greek philosophers, particularly Aristotle (384 BC), and received a good deal of support through the Christian history of thought in the Middle Ages, by a certain number of Christian philosophers and theologians such as St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas. The earliest and most influential systematic account of virtue theory appears in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, the heart of which is his consideration of moral virtues in Book Two.[3] There he argues that

moral virtues are desire-regulating character traits, which are at a mean between more extreme character traits (or vices).

Modernism and post-modernism have witnessed a certain number of ethical theories, which have been examined in different contexts.[4] It is apparent that, through the twentieth century, Western moralists have emphasized the concept of duty.[5] Certain reasons could account for this. The reaction against the utilitarianism[6] which had dominated nineteenth-century moral thought appeared as deontologism which influenced the early part of the century.[7] Furthermore, the strong revival of interest in the ethical writings of Émmanuel Kant played a core role in this moral domination.[8] Nevertheless, in recent years a reaction has grown against duty-ethics. The defenders of virtue ethics regard it as more adequate than utilitarianism or neo-Kantianism because it provides a more comprehensive picture of moral experience and stands closer to the issues of ordinary life.[9] A number of contemporary moral philosophers have maintained that our main concern should be to develop virtues; such qualities as honesty, justice, courage, friendliness, generosity, and so on. This recent development in moral theory marks a return to the ethical thought of ancient Greece, particularly to Aristotle and his Christian followers. This present moral theory has come to be known as virtue ethics.[10]

Furthermore, the notion of virtue and its role in the moral life has been recently reexamined by a number of contemporary theologians and philosophers.[11] This reexamination encourages the current line of thought within or without the religious context; to take the theory of moral virtue as a matter of serious consideration for the contemporary elaboration of moral theories.

Hence, one may argue that reviewing the development of the virtue-based theory, which originates in the ancient Greek era, will help us conceive the nature of virtue theory and understand the influence of philosophical examination upon moral concepts, particularly the concept of virtue. Finally, it helps us realize the philosophical analysis of the predecessors of contemporary virtue-

oriented moralists. This historical review is, more or less, the preeminent goal of this chapter, because it seems that for a more extensive consideration of and scholarly approach to the recent moral theories that are based on or derived from the theory of virtue, one has to examine virtue-theory's philosophical and religious basis through the history of Western thought.

Furthermore, as we will see in the following chapters, the subjects of this work are greatly influenced by, or at least concerned with the Greek-backed understanding and development of the virtue-based morality. Hence, this historical inquiry will enable us to observe the development and the extent of the influence of their philosophical predecessors.

In this introductory chapter, I have attempted to pursue a historical development of the virtue-based moral theory, which took place in both philosophical and religious contexts. I will begin with the Greek origination of the theory, and end with the seventeenth century's elaboration on the theory of virtue within the realm of moral theology. It seems that the virtue-based moral theory was originated in a more philosophical field but developed within a more theological context. To confirm this observation, I am pursuing the theme through its historical development.

This historical approach, besides other explicit outputs, helps us to have a look at the language(s) used in both philosophy and theology to clarify and classify the technical terms. Of course, it is difficult now to certainly confirm a single universal language accepted and used by both. However, it is not difficult to somehow accredit a shared language by which the philosophers and theologians in general, and our two thinkers in particular, could communicate and primarily understand each other. Obviously, I cannot treat the question of the place of virtue in moral theology thoroughly here. I should simply like to offer some historical reflections that may help us understand the nature of virtue, and more particularly, comprehend its noteworthy role in the making of our two thinkers' moral doctrines.

I. Virtue: terminology and typology

a. Definition of Virtue

The origin of "virtue" comes from the Latin *virtus* (manliness), paralleling the Greek term *arete* (excellence).[12] Recently, "*virtue"* and "*vice"* have been largely replaced in the singular by "good" and "evil" or "right" and "wrong," and in the plural by "values" and "disvalues."[13] In a historical approach, the variety of linguistic observations of a single technical term has to be closely considered and well understood. For instance, the usage of ethical terms in general and the word "virtue" in particular has been developed within the linguistic domain and cultural contexts.

According to Plato,[14] a "virtue" enables a thing to perform its work well; its 'work' or 'function' is what only it can do, or what nothing else can do as well. For example, since only the eye can see, to see is the work of an eye; the work of a pruning knife is pruning, since although other tools can be used for that purpose, nothing else can do it as well. The virtue of an eye or a pruning knife is a physical state (being sharp and well tempered etc.).

Hence, the term virtue is not a specifically ethical word. In a comparison between "virtue" and "vice," Plato holds that "virtue is the health, and beauty, and well being of the soul, and vice the disease, and weakness, and deformity, of the same." [15]

Aristotle follows Plato's usage: a virtue (e.g. sharpness) makes the thing to be a good thing of that sort (e.g. a good knife) and makes it do its work well (e.g. to cut effectively). "The virtue of man also will be the state of character which makes a man good and which makes him do his own work well."[16] Many virtues are needed to enable a human being to function well. Some are physical states (not dealt with in the *Nicomachean Ethics*), others are moral virtues and others are intellectual virtues.[17] For Aristotle, virtue is excellence, not mediocrity. The archer's virtue enables him to get an excellent score, although to

do this he must neither fall short nor overshoot but hit the point between each time. Similarly, although virtue is concerned with avoiding both excess and defect in feeling and action so that "in respect of the definition which states its essence, virtue is a mean … with regard to what is best and right it is an extreme."[18] A virtuous person excels at stopping at just the right point.[19]

In a semantic analysis, one should be careful about the adjustment of the two or more words that come from different languages to carry a single meaning. For instance, in his *Preface to Logic*,[20] Cohen points out the danger of relying on the too easy equivalence of the Greek word *areté* with virtue in discussing Aristotle's view of the virtuous man.

Morris Cohen remarks that the English word `virtue,` which is used almost exclusively as the equivalent of *areté*, is very misleading; *areté* would be more accurately rendered as `excellence,` the object of admiration. A historical analyst has to keep in mind that if the view of what it is to do good varies from society to society, from culture to culture, and from time to time, then the semantic structure of the word good itself must necessarily be different in each case.[21]

The Aristotelian understanding of virtue leads us to a meaning that virtue is acquired through the repetition of actions. It is formed by the repetition of actions that insure excellence and progress in performance. For example, we exercise ourselves in practicing justice, generosity, or patience. Virtue is formed in us by the repetition of personal actions and a series of successful efforts that enable us to keep improving. Virtue is properly called a *habitus,* to use the classical term, in Aristotelian terminology.[22]

However, in a recent clarification, Servais Pinckaers explains the term virtue in the following way:

> Virtue is not a habitual way of acting, formed by the repetition of material acts and engendering in us a psychological mechanism. It is a personal capacity for action,

> the fruit of a series of fine actions, a power for progress and perfection.[23]

Shifting from Aristotle's *habitus* to his own terminology in this passage, Pinckaers employs two terms: capacity and power. However, both of these two words could be understood from the Aristotelian perspective. Meanwhile, the phrase, "the fruit of a series of fine actions," has the same characteristic as the Aristotle's *habitus* does.

Pinckaers maintains that "ethics becomes the science of ways leading to true happiness; those qualities of soul and heart that we call virtues."[24] According to Pinckaers, ancient moral theory was centered around the four cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, courage and temperance. Hence, philosophy gave the classic answer to the great question of happiness.[25]

Finally, Pinckaers prefers to define virtue as "a personal capacity for action, the fruit of a series of fine actions, a power for progress and perfection. In the tradition of Aristotle, it is termed a *habitus*."[26] To this point, I may remark that Pinckaers' explanation of the term virtue is basically derived from his understanding of its application in the context of Aristotelian psychology. Therefore, we may conclude that, as Pinckaers also understood, the word 'virtue' deserves a semantic synthesis which includes power, capacity and progress. These three rich concepts together are able to carry the meaning of virtue. Of course, the virtue we are examining here is one applied to a human being who may wish and desire to progress his moral ability and to perfect his character.[27]

b. Types of Virtues

Now I would like to examine the lists of specific types of virtues presented by both Greek philosophers and classical theologians. A typology of "virtue" within the context of Western ethics exhibits a divergence through which certain types of ethical perspectives have to

be observed. To categorize both traditional and modern types of virtues, one has to consider a specific method and goal, for there is a diversity of sets relying on different approaches.[28] Some virtue theorists mention as many as hundred virtues which contribute to making someone a good person. Here I don't want to mention all types of virtues; rather I will examine the classical categorization which was developed through the Middle Ages.

Before Aristotle, we do not see a unique categorization of virtues. Aristotle classified virtue into two parts: intellectual virtue or discipline of the thought acquired through education, and moral virtue or discipline of action acquired through habituated moral action.[29]

In another category, Aristotle distinguishes natural virtue, which we might call temperament, from moral virtue in the strict sense. A person may be born with a calm or brave temperament; but we may seek for the presence of such qualities in another way. Moral virtue in the precise sense, Aristotle maintains, is the submission of one's feelings and outward acts to reason. Although a person who is by nature quiet or spirited may remain so even when it does not fit the situation, a person who possesses the corresponding virtues is quiet or spirited as reason dictates one or the other to be appropriate. The moral virtues improve the elements of human temperament, which are 'persuadable' by reason, by making them readily persuadable.[30]

However, moral virtue is not innate temperament, in that case. It is developed in the course of a person's life by habituation. This is not true of all virtues. The sharpness of a knife or intellectual virtues are not habits. However, virtues of that part of the soul which can be influenced by thought are habits.

Centuries later, Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) relying on his theological background, divided moral virtues into two categories, natural and supernatural. He classifies the Aristotelian moral virtues, namely courage, prudence, temperance, and justice, as natural virtues and augment them with the supernatural virtues of faith, hope, and

charity (love).[31] Aquinas also sorts other virtues under each of these seven virtues, calling them parts of virtues.[32] He maintains that the virtues are both an expression and a means of obeying the commandments of the natural law. Later on these two types of virtues were respectively called cardinal virtues and theological virtues. The origination and development of these two types will be examined in the following discussion.

So far, we have seen that the notion of virtue has received a variety of conceptual rationalizations and semantic descriptions. In addition, there are different types of virtue elaborated by philosophers and theologians. Now, I would like to conclude and close the discussion with a remarkable point raised by some contemporary moral thinkers. They have rightly declared encountering a difficulty with the virtue-based morality; that of understanding the application of certain technical terms. In fact, a virtue-oriented morality requires a richer and more varied vocabulary than a theoretically based morality, precisely because of its link with experience and decision. In accordance with the modern and postmodern lines of thought, it is reasonable and appropriate to consider the diversity of semantic usage in the current pluralistic situation within which the technical terms are understood and applied. This consideration also applies to our comparative exploration in which the two thinkers from different theological and traditional horizons will be studied and scrutinized.

II. Moral virtue(s): historical development

In the history of ethics and moral theories, virtue theory is the oldest normative tradition in Western philosophy, having its roots in the ancient Greek civilization, as well as in the history of moral theology.[33] The two main sources, namely rational philosophy and religious authority, have side by side shared in the fabrication and development of the virtue-based moral theory. The notion of virtue,

both semantically and contextually, has received a reliable development through the history of philosophy and theology.[34]

Now, we approach the historical development of 'virtue-based' moral theory. Generally speaking, virtue theory states that the foundation of morality is the development of good character traits, or virtues. However, it seems that this definition does not adequately illustrate the theory; thus, here we focus on the role of the historical dimension in our understanding of virtue. In developing the issue of virtue's relationship to history and culture, Yearley rightly argues that "an understanding of virtue often depends on a grasp and evaluation of cultural and historical factors in a way that many other ethical inquiries do not."[35] To perceive these historical circumstances and to understand the reason behind Yearley's argumentation, I examine the study of the formulation and development of virtue during two periods: the Ancient Greek period and the Middle Ages.

For Socrates (470-399 BC), virtue is knowledge which involves not only beliefs, but also a capacity for recognizing relevant distinctions and an ability to act. He maintains that the good life consists of being virtuous. Socrates believes that, as Aristotle explains, all the moral virtues were forms of knowledge, in such a way that when we knew what justice was, it followed that we would be just.[36] Assuming intellectual capacity or knowledge as the only good that shapes man's virtuous life, Socrates insists that ignorance is the only bar to virtue.[37]

Socrates maintains that there must be some main good of the soul as health is the main good of the body. He concludes that the special good of the intelligent person's soul is none other than justice, which is *arete* or virtue. This virtue, i.e. justice, according to Socrates, accomplishes the ordering and harmonizing of the *self*, before all else. Hence, the one who is so harmonized and ordered will be the one who has achieved this most important *arete*.[38] For Socrates, the way of achieving this harmony and order of the self, namely the virtue of justice, is to become involved in a lifelong intellectual engagement.

Of course, Socrates derived and based his understanding of moral behaviors in general and virtue in particular on his rational philosophy, as well as epistemology. Although here Socrates seems to equate virtue and knowledge when he says "virtue is knowledge," his idea of the nature of moral virtue is still vague and unclear. However, the thesis of moral virtue has become more advanced and unambiguous in his successors' and pupils' argumentation. Hence, MacIntyre believes that the credit is for Plato and Aristotle who established the necessary psychological, political and metaphysical dimensions for an adequate theory of the virtues.[39]

Plato (c. 430-347 BC), who preceded and was influenced by some of the Socratic theoretical and practical observations, believes that an integral part of one's quest for truth is understanding the ideal nature of virtues such as justice, piety, and courage. His philosophical theory of 'ideas' and 'forms' helps him to shape his moral system in the framework of a rational-spiritual fabrication. For Plato, intellectual virtue is central, but not all virtue is intellectual; some virtue is appetitive, and some emotional.[40]

Plato's idea of God's perfection has a main role in his system of values and moral philosophy. As the perfect being, God is the cause of good and of good only. This intimately relates God to the fundamental realities such as Good, Truth and Beauty.

Moreover, Plato related the four Greek cardinal virtues of wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice to society. According to Plato, in a just social order, the specific virtue of the philosopher king is wisdom, of the soldier, courage, of the artisan, temperance, and of the whole state, justice.[41] Plato almost accepts his master's account of justice as an *arete* (virtue) of character, as well as his idea that only justice could secure the human good. Hence, justice, according to Plato, is what orders and harmonizes the soul in such a way as to insure that all of our interests can be pursued in the right measure, so that none of our distinct desires will frustrate the others. So justice in the state is likewise the balancing of potentially conflicting interests of

different parts of the state.[42] Within the context of a just order, the utmost goodness and happiness for both man and state has been understood and acknowledged by Plato. As long as one is just, Plato proclaims, one will have a good and happy life.[43]

With respect to the unity and interaction between the four Greek cardinal virtues, namely wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice, Plato, like Socrates, maintains that wisdom is the special virtue of the rational part of the soul. Plato argues that one who possesses wisdom will have all of the virtues because when the rational part of the soul functions virtuously, it will impose on the rest of the soul the harmony and order that constitutes justice in the soul, and thus will ensure that the soul is also courageous and temperate.[44]

According to Plato this application of certain virtues in a just system helps us grasp a general understanding of Platonic usage of the term virtue. Nonetheless, one might consent that this categorization doesn't elucidate Plato's entire share in forming the theory of moral virtue. As we have seen from these two Greek philosophers, so far we do not find a systematic determination and categorization of the term 'virtue' and its specific role in shaping the whole moral system.

However, the earliest and most effectual systematic account of virtue theory originates in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, the core of which is his explanation of moral virtues in Book two. Aristotle (384-322 BC) constructed his moral system on the foundation of his rational and philosophical structure. For him, the goal of life is happiness or well being (*eudaimonia*),[45] and virtue is found by finding the Golden Mean.

In the *Nicomachean Ethics,* Aristotle argues that moral virtues are desire regulating character traits which are at a mean between more extreme character traits (or vices).[46] For example, in response to the natural emotion of fear, we should develop the virtuous character trait of courage. If we develop an excessive character trait by curbing fear too much, then we are said to be rash, which is a vice. If on the other

extreme, we develop a deficient character trait by curbing fear too little, then we are said to be cowardly, which is also a vice. The virtue of courage, then, lies at the mean between the excessive extreme of rashness and the deficient extreme of cowardice.

Most moral virtues, and not just courage, are to be understood as falling at the mean between two accompanying vices. Aristotle illustrates this with the virtues of temperance, liberality, magnificence, high-mindedness, controlled anger, friendliness, modesty, and righteous indignation. He concludes that it is difficult to live the virtuous life primarily because it is often difficult to find the mean between the extremes.[47]

Aristotle thought human nature to be independent of cultures, so that one can change his nature by habitual characters. When Aristotle maintains this possibility of change, he considers it a duty of the philosopher or ethical theorist to explicate this nature. Aristotle widely took into account the role of one's action and acknowledged the role of human emotions in the process of character-shaping. Aristotle argued that both action and feeling should take place to develop a habitual character which is finally maintained as a virtue.[48]

Criticizing the Platonic notion of the Form of the Good as useless for action, Aristotle develops the argument that emphasizes specifically human forms of activity. He employs his own vocabulary to determine the internal and external[49] dimensions of a life of action.[50]

There are several answers, both radical and conservative, to the primary question "is there any important distinction between Plato's and Aristotle's theories of virtue?" In his essay on Platonic account of virtues, Seung answers this question by an emphatic 'yes.' He asserts that "Platonic virtues are molded on transcendent ideals, and Aristotelian virtues are built into practical context. He continues that "Aristotle, instead of transcendent values, always appeals to the context of practice."[51]

It is unclear to me that in the course of moral values and their sources, we could sharply distinguish between Plato and Aristotle to the extent that Seung claims, so that only Platonic virtues and not Aristotelian incline towards a transcendent fount. However, it seems that to achieve the virtues and to maintain the values both Plato and Aristotle reckon on human action and practice.

For both Plato and Aristotle, there is a relationship between virtue and happiness. However, Aristotle rejects the Platonic confidence that justice is sufficient for a good and happy life.[52] Virtue and happiness are neither simply identical nor entirely independent of each other.

Virtue becomes irrelevant unless it somehow leads to happiness and happiness cannot exist unless it is somehow bound to the practice of virtue; otherwise it cannot provide a moralized human nature. Both of them tried, likewise, to avoid relativism and present a universal philosophical psychology that entails an idea of happiness and satisfaction of human desire.

Furthermore, the ultimate end, which is sometimes articulated by the term happiness, is identified as the supreme good. For Aristotle, virtues, particularly intellectual, are the means that lead us toward the supreme good, namely *eudaimonia* (happiness).[53] Aristotle finally conceives of the highest human good as being activity in conformity with the rational principle that is virtues. And the best such activity transcends the merely ethical virtues, though it has such virtues as necessary conditions. For a human being, the most complete rational activity and hence the most complete human good, can only be achieved by living in such a way as to fully realize the virtues of the rational intellect through engaging in theoretical activity and achieving wisdom.[54]

In a brief conclusion, the Greek philosophers' ethical approach leads one to believe that they are more interested in what makes a human being a good or an excellent human being rather than what

makes an action a good or a bad one. This consideration has led some recent thinkers like Nicholas Smith to express a view that "the preoccupations of ancient Greek ethics seem more focused on moral psychology than on the social aspects of ethics."[55] We may not accept the totality of this assertion, but it is obvious that the Greek oriented virtue theory deserves more focus on the subject part of the problem rather than the object.

The school of Stoicism,[56] founded in 108 BC, approached the theory of virtue within its whole philosophical framework. For the Stoics, as MacIntyre explains, virtue is single and indivisible. That is, one cannot possess it in part; either one is virtuous or one is not.[57] What nature and reason invite us to is the observance of the four traditional virtues, prudence, courage, temperance, and justice.[58] However, according to the Stoics, one cannot possess one of these without possessing all. Above all, virtue is to be sought only for its own sake; pleasure, by contrast, is not to be sought at all. They content that desire, hope, fear, pleasure and pain are against reason and nature; one should cultivate a passionless absence of desire and a disregard for pleasure and pain.

Here, we observe a tendency to rationalize and naturalize the human characters and behaviors with respect to the human achievement of the moral criteria and norms. This could not be understood as an influence of the Aristotelian observation, and may to some extent be assumed as a rival theory, but it obviously indicates the domination of rational thinking developed by Greek philosophers, particularly Aristotle.

The separation between Stoics and Aristotle is more obvious in the course of the ultimate end. Unlike Aristotle, who distinguishes between the virtuous act, which is worthy of praise, and the ultimate Good or Happiness, which is not worthy of praise, Stoics believe that the Good itself is worthy of praise because the only Good is the Noble and the Beautiful. Hence virtue does not tend toward any external end but suffices to itself; being desirable in and of itself. Therefore, virtue

is the highest good and the supreme end of life. Only virtue is good in the full sense of the word, and virtue consists of the immutable conformity of man with reason and with himself.[59]

Unlike the Stoics, whose ultimate happiness was virtue, for Epicurus (341-270 BC) the goal of life and the final happiness was pleasure. Epicurus explains that "the truest happiness does not come from enjoyment of physical pleasures but from a simple life, free from anxiety, with the normal physical needs satisfied."[60]

As MacIntyre clarifies, for Epicurus, the absence of pain is a greater good than positive pleasures.[61] Epicurus argues that freedom from intense desire is a condition of pleasure. He maintains that prudence is the guide to happiness, the foundation of virtues, and more valuable than philosophy.[62] Justifying the place of wisdom in his pleasure-based morality, Epicurus says, "We cannot live pleasantly without living wisely and nobly and righteously."[63] Morality is concerned with the pursuit of pleasure, and not as the Stoics believed, with the pursuit of virtue independent of pleasure. Of course, for Epicurus, virtue is simply the art of pleasure.[64]

The question here is how a human being applies this art to a moral life. To answer this question, Epicurus explains that every moral or virtuous action is identified as a means toward the end, which is pleasure. Meanwhile, he adds that the notion of good is entirely embedded in that of happiness, which is itself absorbed in the notion of supreme pleasure. For him, any value or good is a means to the end, namely pleasure. The notion of virtue likewise holds a certain meaning and application in the language of Epicurus. He recognizes virtue as the confident way through which the state of supreme pleasure is attained.

The virtuous man, therefore, is the one who strongly and securely possesses the art or technique of pleasure. Depending on this art and technique, one is able to achieve the maximum of pleasure along with minimum pain by a precise anticipation and an appropriate

practice.[65] The difference we see here between the Epicurean understanding of virtue and Aristotelian cognition of that does not, to my understanding, derive from their definition of the notion of virtue, rather it derives from their application of the term and fitting it within their entire moral discipline.

Here, we aught not overlook the pre Middle Ages intellectual and spiritual movement usually labeled as Neo-Platonism. The most well known figure of the movement was Plotinus (205-270), whose thought has a significant role in the development of both Christian thought through the Middle Ages and the Islamic discipline during a certain period.[66] Hence, the examination of Neo-Platonic understanding and application of the term virtue helps us in our upcoming comparative discussion.[67]

Identifying the structure of the world and our place in that structure, Plotinus holds a metaphysical method in which all things proceed from the One and return once more to it. So, depending on his specific metaphysical terminology, Plotinus employs the two technical terms, i.e. multiplicity and unity,[68] to fashion the structure of the whole universe. He explains how many things which are in the universe must refer back to one principle and this one principle contains everything within itself. He says:

> The One is all things and no one of them; the source of all things is not all things; all things are its possession– running back, so to speak, to it– or, more correctly, not yet, so, they will be. But a universe from an unbroken unity, in which there appears no diversity, not even duality? It is precisely because there is nothing within the One that all things are from it: in order that Being may be brought about, the source must be no Being but Being's generator, in what is to be thought of as the primal act of generation.[69]

For Plotinus, the One is distinguished from the Nous, being the core principle of the whole Being. To define the One, Plotinus argues that "The One, then, is not *Nous* but something higher still: *Nous* is

still a being but that First is no being but prior to all being: it cannot be a being, for a being has what we may call the form of its reality but the One is without form, even intellectual form."[70]

Constructing his philosophy on the rational consistency between the three elements, namely One, Soul, Nous (Intellectual Principle), Plotinus performs the hierarchy of the universe and urges human to ascend to the first principle, i.e. Nous. Here is the beginning of the Plotinus' moral discipline. However, mounting toward the first principle is just the first step in the hierarchical movement of human soul. The ultimate goal, according to Plotinus, is to become godlike. In this regard, he states:

> Therefore, first let each become godlike and each beautiful who cares to see God and Beauty. So, mounting, the Soul will come first to the Intellectual-Principle and survey all the beautiful Ideas in the Supreme and will avow that this is Beauty, that the Ideas are Beauty . . . What is beyond the Intellectual-Principle we affirm to be the nature of Good radiating Beauty before it.[71]

For Plotinus, the soul by its very nature is Divine, and evil must be looked upon as an accretion to the soul due to its communion with the physical world. Goodness is of the essence of the soul, evil is accidental and not constitutive.[72] To explain the relationship between soul and good and evil, Plotinus affirms that:

> As the Soul is evil by being interfused with the body, and by coming to share the body's states and to think the body's thoughts, so it would be good, it would be possessed of virtue, if it threw off the body's moods and devoted itself to its own Act.[73]

By this metaphysical background, Plotinus approaches the problem of virtue, elucidating its meaning and fitting its application within the hierarchical horizon. According to Plotinus, virtue is that state of the soul which is affection to its uniform; just as evil results from affecting things unlike and below it. Virtue, therefore, while it

does not consist of cleansing or purification, is consequent upon this purification. There will be a gradation of virtue insofar as the hierarchy within the soul reflects the objective hierarchy of the whole universe. This upward path is paced by the use of Dialectic.[74] The whole of philosophy is ordered to getting the soul to reconsider the path to its ultimate origin, the first principle, the ineffable One, which is attained in a spiritual union beyond doctrine and communicable thought. Virtue will describe way-stations on this route, necessary states of the soul as it turns inward, away from the diversion of otherness, and finds within the connection of the transcendent and its own destiny as union with the One, the supreme God.[75]

Hence, Plotinus affirms that attaining likeness to the One by unifying with Him is the final end for humanity, when he says, "we have to fix our gaze above the image and attain Likeness to the Supreme Exemplar."[76] To achieve this likeness and unity, love plays a very profound role. In the following chapters, when we explore the notion of love of God, we will thoroughly consider Plotinus' examination of love.

What is worthy to be remarked here is the fact that Plotinus, relying on Plato's terminological and cosmological discipline, tends to understand virtue as a means, and of course the main one, to help the soul to elevate, in a hierarchical way, towards the perfection. Even the intellectual virtues such as wisdom and knowledge, if Plotinus is to use Aristotle's language, direct the soul toward the Ultimate end, which is the unification with the One. In the position of this unification, the soul is able, by and through love, to have a vision of the pure Beauty.[77]

Approaching the critical time of the Middle Ages, we encounter a new examination of ethical theories, in general, and the notion of virtue, in particular. St. Augustine (354-430) grounded his philosophical doctrine on a valuable synthesis of Platonic and Neo-Platonic thought with Christian tradition.[78]

Regarding the influence of Neo-Platonic doctrine on Augustine,[79] it is mentioned that Augustine had found in Neo-Platonism some technical terms and concepts by which he was able to build an intellectually sophisticated Christianity. Concepts of the ladder or chain of beings and evil as the absence of good are, for example, some of those concepts accepted and developed by Augustine in his metaphysical doctrine.[80]

In his moral system, Augustine maintained the cardinal virtues of Plato while insisting that love is the fundamental source of all virtue.[81] Like Plato, Augustine observes moral questions from the position of the happiness principle, or *eudaimonism*, which he joins to God's ideal perfection as its norm, and to the centrality of love. He defines virtue as the *ordo amoris* (order of love).[82]

There are two developed steps here. First, it seems that Augustine has preferred to add the virtue of love to the Platonic cardinal virtues and believed in five virtues instead of four. The second step is the order of virtues in the whole moral system. For Augustine, it is love, which has a religious derivation, that is regarded as the center of all virtues. As Kent explains, for Augustine all true virtues are forms of love rooted in charity, the love of God and neighbor commanded by Christ.[83] This kind of approach, as Kent interprets, leads Augustine to the fact that virtues by their nature are other-regarding, helping him to develop his moral theory in the context of social and anthropological determination.

To explain the process of reaching the ultimate end and achieving happiness (*eudaimonia*), Augustine is relying on his God centered cosmological doctrine. Within this theological framework, Augustine, as Kent remarks, argues that "in order to be able to attain happiness, man should live as God lives. To attain this, our mind should not be self-contented but should be subjected to God."[84] The primary key here, as we understand from Augustine's ethics, is the relationship between God and man, which is formulated and

substantiated by love. We will discuss more about Augustine's account of love of God in chapter five.

However, by the late Middle Ages Aristotle's virtue theory was the precise account of morality,[85] especially insofar as it was endorsed by the medieval theologian-philosopher, Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274). It was the influence of Aristotle that led him to grant the first place to the doctrine of goods and virtues. It is remarked that Thomas Aquinas has offered a Christianized version of Aristotle's theory, preserving the pattern and most of the detail of Aristotle's ethics. However, Aquinas maintained that Aristotle's theory is grievously incomplete, and it is incapable of completion without drawing on Christian insight.[86]

The most complete statement of his moral philosophy is found in the first part of the second division of the *Summa Theologica*.[87] He begins with a discussion of the chief good, which is the blessedness of union with God. Then he approaches the notion of virtue, its definition, and division into intellectual and moral, using the same vocabulary employed by Greek philosophy, particularly Aristotle. Finally he explains and develops the theory of theological virtues, which are derived from faith.[88]

The chief problem at this time, as MacIntyre explains, is "whether or how to integrate theistic doctrines of the virtues with Platonic, Aristotelian, or Stoic accounts and how to reconcile an ethic of virtues which one of Divine law, one binding human beings universally."[89] It would be reasonable to begin the period, i.e. the late Middle Ages, with Saint Augustine in the fourth and fifth centuries and extend it until modern patterns of thought that become dominant in the Renaissance.[90] During this period, all Western thought was dominated by a synthesis of Greek philosophy and a theistic doctrine of faith.[91] In medieval discussions, because of the domination of Aristotelianism, the particular virtues described by Aristotle and the ancient Greeks became known as the cardinal virtues. Throughout the Middle Ages, theist moralists and theologians spoke of the seven virtues, adding to

the cardinal virtues the "theological virtues" of faith, hope and charity.[92]

Aquinas combined Augustinian, Platonic and Aristotelian theses in characterizing the virtues. Now, we have a new development in the notion and classification of virtues that carries both philosophical and theological consequences. This elaboration influenced and shaped the moral path of thought in the Middle Ages. Partially following and developing the Augustinian doctrine, St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) advanced a remarkable synthesis of Aristotelian and theological thought.[93] Depending on his theistic framework, Aquinas added the theological virtues to the Aristotelian list of moral virtues and simultaneously maintained Aristotle's categorization of intellectual and moral virtues.[94] Aquinas combined the notion that morality is obedience to the decrees of God with the notion that morality's function is to specify what it will take for humans to actualize their human nature or essence.[95]

In his understanding of man's end, Aquinas followed Aristotle and treated happiness as the end to life. However, Aquinas identified it with Divine beatitude. He has interpreted the Aristotelian virtues in a framework of law,[96] which has both Stoic and Hebraic origins.[97] Aquinas' contribution to virtue-based morality is remarkable because of the particular amendments which he made to the Aristotelian system and the way in which he exhibited the flexibility of Aristotelianism.[98] It seems that Aquinas expanded the framework of the Aristotelian virtue-based morality and added to the rational framework the theological ones. He maintains that the virtues which one gains by an Aristotelian analysis must be complemented by the theological virtues of faith, hope and love.[99] Contrary to Augustine who pointed to love as the center of all virtues, Aquinas does not seem to follow Augustine's observation. In the following chapters, we will further reflect on these two different approaches to the virtue of love.

To summarize our introduction to the moral doctrines of these great Christian philosophers, namely Augustine and Aquinas, I would

like to quote McInerny's statement regarding the historical states of the two figures. He says:

> There can be little doubt that what is called the philosophy of Augustine is principally Platonic in inspiration, although some Aristotelian elements are apparent. The philosophy of Aquinas, on the other hand, is principally Aristotelian…
>
> What cannot be questioned is the massive impact of the thought of Augustine on Aquinas. Indeed, it may be said that anything like an understanding of Aquinas depends on a previous understanding of Augustine. Thus, these two chief Christian Doctors must be regarded as complementary, rather than opposed, inspirations in the continuing Christian task of bringing to bear on truths of faith whatever of validity can be found in natural thought.[100]

At this point, it is notably important to mention the significant role of Muslim thinkers in shaping Aquinas' systematic moral theory. From the tenth to the thirteenth centuries, Muslim philosophers elaborated the transformation of Greek thought to Western thinkers such as Aquinas in two ways: first through the translation of the Greek heritage, and secondly through the explanation and interpretation of the heritage in a manner that the rational/Aristotelian thought might get an appropriate harmony with their theological and theistic context.[101]

These critical tasks were remarkably accomplished by Muslim thinkers, particularly Ibn Sīnā (980-1037) and Ibn Rushd (1126-1198).[102] Hence, Aquinas, as MacIntyre explains, drew heavily upon Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Rushd and other contributors to the Islamic debates, about the relationship of *sharī`a*, Islamic law, to Platonic and Aristotelian theses.[103] This historical observation would be very helpful in our comparative discussion of a Christian thinker who is more or less influenced by Medieval philosophy, and a Muslim thinker whose thought is fairly affected by the line of Islamic philosophy. In our comparative chapter, we will see in more detail that both routes of

thought go back to a somewhat related background, and have been irrigated by the same rational-historical spring.

At this juncture, I would like to remark that no one could neglect or disregard the interrelation between the theistic doctrines and the historical developments of ethical theories. It is true that the Aristotelian virtue-based moral theory was dominant throughout the post-Aristotle period and the Middle Ages; and the mainstream effort to constitute a virtue-based moral system started by the ancient Greek philosophers, but its progressive illustration, especially of the religious level or the Divine sense, is owed to the theological endeavors by Christian, as well as Muslim thinkers during the Middle Ages. However, with the decline of Middle Ages' thought and the rise of the Renaissance, the Scientific Revolution, and the Enlightenment movements, the influence of Aristotle's virtue ethics, like other parts of his rational philosophy, significantly declined. In this regard, some contemporary ethicists like MacIntyre, Philippa Foot, and G. H. von Wright argue that virtue ethics was neglected by modern moral philosophy and needs now to be recovered.[104]

Nevertheless, some figures have attempted to continue and develop the virtue-based moral theory after the decline of the Middle Ages. We may encounter these figures in several theological and philosophical contexts.[105] For the purpose of this research, I would like to consider and compare two figures from two different traditions. Living almost at the same time but in different places, Mullā Muhsin Fayd Kāshānī with a Persian-Islamic background, and Nicolas Malebranche with a French-Christian background are two thinkers who have seriously considered the whole Greek oriented intellectual and moral discipline and attempted to develop a systematic virtue-based moral theory. In the rest of this work, I am going to scrutinize their understanding of the above-mentioned discipline, and critically compare their observations and reflections in this regard.

We shall conclude this introductory chapter by mentioning some concerns. First, as we have seen in the historical progress of

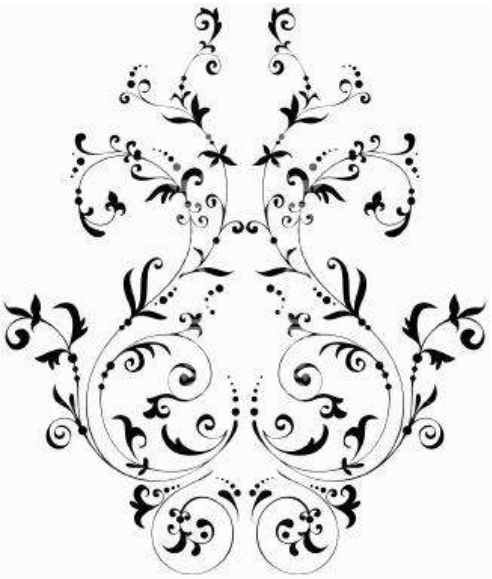
virtue-based morality, both philosophical and theological disciplines jointly took place to form the development of the terminology of virtue theory. This terminology, more or less, has been used in the language of modern and postmodern thinkers. To my knowledge, so far, there is no precise measure or criterion to determine the exact extent of the partnership of each side in that historical development. Thus, as I understand, both lines of thinking, namely philosophy and theology, are equally appreciated for their part in the development of virtue-oriented morality.

Secondly, pursuing a historical development will help us not only to perceive and expose any hidden element that takes place in the fabrication of a theoretical system, but also to reveal, illuminate and reconsider some sophisticated aspects of each system. For example, as we will see, Kāshānī and Malebranche, using the same terminology and relying on the same historical background,[106] are assumed to understand, interpret, and finally systematize the issue of love of God within the context of virtue-based ethics in a special manner. The historical development of virtue theory will help us understand the different aspects of our two thinkers' backgrounds. For further expansion in this respect, I would like to refer the readers to the following chapters.

Thirdly, in this historical approach, I have so far attempted to present my understanding and describe a historical sequence throughout the discussion. In understanding Kāshānī and Malebranche's approaches towards the concepts of virtue and love of God, like many other instances, we cannot hope to understand what the problems are unless we know what problems were posed by the philosophical and theological predecessors of the theory and how the historical context imposes limits upon solutions to their problems.

Finally, to analyze concepts in term of their historical sequence may be useful for another reason. In abstracting certain characteristics of the sequence, and thus lending it an ideal character, we acquire a method for noting similar sequences embedded in quite different

historical processes. This method may help us in our analysis of the results and limitations of the application of the theory in different historical communities but with similar rules and norms.



Notes:

[1] The two technical terms, ethics and morality, are frequently defined very similarly and commonly used interchangeably. The term moral is derived from the Latin word *mores*, and the word ethical is derived from the Greek word *ethos*. Both words are referring to customary behavior. However, some moralists believe that ethics is the explicit, philosophical reflection on moral beliefs and practices. The difference between ethics and morality is similar to the difference between musicology and music. Ethics is a conscious stepping back and reflecting on morality, just as musicology is a conscious reflection on music. Morality refers to the first-order beliefs and practices about good and evil by means of which we guide our behavior. Ethics is the second-order, reflective consideration of our moral beliefs and practices. There are many attempts among recent ethicists to present a sufficient definition for 'morality' as a systematic science. Bernard Gert, for example, defines morality as "an informal public system applying to all rational persons, governing behavior that affects others, and including what are commonly known as the moral rules, ideals, and virtues and has the lessening of evil or harm as its goal." See Bernard Gert, *Morality, Its Nature and Justification* (Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 26. For a specific discussion about the distinction between morality and ethics, see Robert Piercey, "Not Choosing Between Morality and Ethics," *The Philosophical Forum*, vol. XXXII, no. 1 (Spring 2001), pp. 53-72. In this essay, Piercey maintains that the distinction between morality and ethics has figured prominently in recent continental philosophy.

[2] There are recently some scholars deeply concern and develop the virtue ethic problem. See for example: Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981; second edition, 1984); *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame, 1988); *Three Versions of Moral Inquiry: Encyclopedia, Genealogy, and Tradition* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame, 1990). The Italian edition of the last book, *Enciclopedia, Genealogia e Tradizione* (Milan, 1993), includes a special introduction on MacIntyre and a biography. I should also like to mention the article by Martha Nussbaum, "Virtue Revived," *Times Literary Supplement* 4657 (July 3, 1992), pp. 9-11. See also Lee Yearly, *Mencius and Aquinas: Theories of Virtue and Conceptions of Courage* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990); Richard Taylor, *Virtue Ethics* (New York: Linden Books, 1991); Peter Simpson, "Contemporary Virtue Ethics and Aristotle," *Review of Metaphysics*, 45 (1992), pp. 503-524; Nancy Sherman, *Making a Necessity of Virtue: Aristotle and Kant on Virtue* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Jean Porter, *The Recovery of Virtue* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990). Furthermore, Yearley has demonstrated and properly classified some recent works on virtue.

See Lee Yearley, "Recent work on virtue," *Religious Studies Review*, vol. 16, no. 1 (January 1990), pp. 1-9.

[3] However, Nicholas Smith, in his essay, explains some concerns regarding the Homeric origination of the concept of virtue '*Arete*.' See Nicholas Smith, "Some Thoughts about the Origins of Greek Ethics," *The Journal of Ethics*, no. 5 (2001), pp. 3-20.

[4] For instance, Lawrence M. Hinman in his recent book: *Ethics: A Pluralistic Approach to Moral Theory* has fully examined at least eight different philosophical and theological schools that elaborate and develop the systematic ethics in a diversity of context and methods. See Lawrence M. Hinman, *Ethics: A Pluralistic Approach to Moral Theory*, 1994.

[5] Although Carney in the very beginning of his essay remarks that "For at least a century the center of the stage in both religious and philosophical ethics has been occupied by the notion of obligation (or duty)," he then explains that a number of theologians, in recent years, have begun "to reexamine the notion of virtue and its possible role within a contemporary understanding of the moral life." See Frederick S. Carney, "The Virtue-Obligation Controversy," *Journal of Religious Ethics*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1973), pp. 5-6.

[6] In a brief recognition, utilitarianism is defined as "One must act to achieve the greatest good for the greatest number." Accordingly, this theory requires a stable definition of good, as well as computation of amount of good. It places public good over private good. There is a possible harmful to minorities and individuals, sacrificed for the majority. It is the consequences, not the acts, that are right or wrong (the ends justify the means). For more details and concern about utilitarianism, see Bernard Williams and Amartya Sen eds., *Utilitarianism and Beyond*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982; Anthony Quinton, *Utilitarian Ethics*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973; David Lyons, *Forms and Limits of Utilitarianism*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965; and D. H. Hodgson, *Consequences of Utilitarianism*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967.

[7] Philip Cafaro maintains that twentieth-century moral theory has been preoccupied with the nature and possibility of the moral ought, and to a lesser extent with a detailed specification of particular duties." He finally acknowledges that "modern moral theory has been essentially deontological." See Philip Cafaro, "Virtue Ethics (Not Too) Simplified," paper presented at the 20th World Congress of Philosophy (Boston, 1998), note # 2.

[8] On Kant's interest in the virtues, see Robert Louden's "Kant's Virtue Ethics," *Philosophy*, Vol. 61 (1986), pp. 473-89. It is out of the scope of this work to reflect on the Kant's approach to the issue of virtue morality. Kant, for example, uses his own vocabulary to define virtue and applies its concept within the framework of his moral system. In this regard he says that "virtue is …. the moral strength of a man's will in fulfilling his duty." See Kant, *The Doctrine of Virtue: Part II of The Metaphysics of Morals* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania

Press, 1964), p. 66. For more examination and defense of the Kantian conception of virtue, see Onora O'Neill, "Kant's Virtues," in R. Crisp, *How Should One Live*? *Essays on the Virtues* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 77-97. However, there are some efforts recently, as Yearley remarks, to deal with the interpretative issue of whether Kant offers primarily an ethics of virtue or an ethics of rule. See Lee H. Yearley, "Recent Work on Virtue," *Religious Studies Review*, vol. 16, no. 1 (January 1990), p. 7.

[9] See William C. Spohn, "The Return of Virtue Ethics," *Theological Studies*, vol. 53, issue 1 (March 1992), p. 60. To support his statement, Spohn mentions two more references: Clifford Williams, "Teaching Virtues and Vices," *Philosophy Today* 33 (1989, p. 197; and James A. Donahue, "The Use of Virtue and Character in Applied Ethics," *Horizons* 17 (1990), pp. 228-243. See also John A. Gallagher's *Time Past, Time Present: A Historical Study of Catholic Moral Theology* (New York: Paulist, 1990), pp. 56-62.

[10] The contemporary revival of interest in the virtues has been properly affirmed by Philippa Foot's "Virtues and Vices" in her *Virtues and Vices and Other Essays In Moral Philosophy* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978), pp. 1-18 and Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue*, 2nd edition (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984). Furthermore, some reviews of the recent literature are remarkable: Arthur Fleming, "Reviewing the Virtues," *Ethics*, Vol. 90 (1980), pp. 587-95; Gregory Pence, "Recent Work on the Virtues," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (October, 1984), pp. 281-97; "Virtue Theory," *A Companion to Ethics*, edited by Peter Singer (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), pp. 249-58; Marcia Baron, "Varieties of Ethics of Virtue," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 22 (January, 1985), 47-53; Gregory Trianosky, "What Is Virtue Ethics All About?" *American Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (October, 1990), pp. 335-44; and Phillip Montague, "Virtue Ethics: A Qualified Success Story," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (January, 1992), pp. 53-61. For historical views of virtue, see Richard White, "Historical Perspectives on the Morality of Virtue," *The Journal of Value Inquiry*, Vol. 25 (1991), pp. 217-31. Also see *the excellent bibliography in The Virtues*, edited by Robert B. Kruschwitz and Robert C. Roberts (Belmont, California: Wadsworth, 1987). See also Halberstam's *Virtues and Values*, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1988; John W. Chapman and William A. Galston (eds.), *Virtue*, New York: New York University Press, 1992; and John Deigh's *Ethics and Personality: Essays in Moral Psychology*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992. For a utilitarian approach to virtue, see John Kilcullen, "Utilitarianism and Virtue," *Ethics*, Vol. 93, No. 3 (April, 1983), pp. 451-66.

[11] In this regard, Carney remarks that recently "a number of theologians (H. Richard Niebuhr, 1963; Smart, 1966; Outka, 1968; Gustafson, 1970; Hauerwas, 1972) and philosophers (Mandelbaum, 1955; Anscombe, 1958; Foot, 1958; Frankena, 1970; Murdoch, 1970) have begun to reexamine the notion of virtue and its possible role within a contemporary understanding of the moral life." See Frederick S.

Carney, "The virtue-obligation controversy," *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 1/1 (1973), p. 6.

[12] Nicholas Smith, in his essay, explains some concerns regarding the Homeric origination of the concept of virtue '*Arete*.' He has clearly argued that we, in our approach to the issue of '*Arete*,' have to keep in our mind the Homeric influence on the classical Greek philosophy. See Nicholas Smith, "Some Thoughts about the Origins of Greek Ethics," *The Journal of Ethics*, no. 5 (2001), pp. 3-20.

[13] W. L. Reese, ed., *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion* (Humanities Press: New Jersey 1980), p. 613.

[14] Plato, *The Republic*, 352-4. Besides his own works, Plato's examination of moral philosophy, in general, and the theory of virtue, in particular, could be found in the following works: Irwin, *Plato's Moral Theory*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977; Gould, *The Development of Plato's Ethics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955.

[15] Plato, *The Republic*, Book IV.

[16] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, W.D. Ross's translation in *The Works of Aristotle Translated into English*, Oxford 1928 (reprinted 'World's Classics'), 1106 a15-25. References of the form '1234 b3' are Bekker numbers, printed in the margins of most editions.

[17] For these two types of virtues, see Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, III. 7-V & VI. In the following pages, I will have more details in the different types of virtues.

[18] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1107 a8.

[19] Recently David Bostock has approached Aristotle's Ethics in a certain pattern. He elucidates his understanding of virtue and character in the eyes of Aristotle, and explores its relationship with reason and desire. See David Bostock, *Aristotle's Ethics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (2000), pp. 33-34.

[20] Morris R. Cohen, *A Preface to Logic* (London, 1946), p. 16.

[21] The problem is even worse when we confront with a third language such as Arabic in our case. We will see that there are several equivalent words for the term 'virtue' in Arabic language each of which has its own meaning, application and invention.

[22] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book II, Chapters 1-5.

[23] Servais Pinckaers, *The Sources of Christian Ethics* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1995), p. 364.

[24] *Ibid*., p. 19.

[25] *Ibid*., p. 203. For Aristotle's examination of Happiness, see David Bostock, *Aristotle's Ethics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (2000), pp. 11-15.

[26] Pinckaers, *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, p. 364.

[27] To perceive how Aristotle determines the application of virtue in the circle of human desire, see David Bostock, *Aristotle's Ethics*, pp. 33-34.

[28] This diversity goes to the extent that some writer holds that "the battlfield of ethics is strewn with the corpses of abandoned lists of virtues." Arthur J. Dyck, "A Unified Theory of Virtue and Obligation," *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1973, p. 41.

[29] For more explanation about the types of virtue in the eyes of Aristotle, see David Bostock, *Aristotle's Ethics*, pp. 46-47.

[30] For Aristotle's full observation of the virtue categories, see Aristotle, "The Ethics of Virtue," in L. P. Pojman, ed., *Ethical Theory* (Belmont, 1989), pp. 293-302.

[31] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, vol. 2, pp. 851-853; See also Alasdair MacIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1966), p. 118.

[32] For a full Aquinas' list of virtues, see Lee H. Yearley, *Mencius and Aquinas* (New York: SUNY Press, 1990), pp. 29-36. See also Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, vol. 2, pp. 827-853

[33] Although we may find some origination for the issue of *Arete* (virtue) in pre-Socratic Homeric tradition, but they have not been taken seriously into account by the philosophers. See Nicholas Smith, "Some Thoughts about the Origins of Greek Ethics," *The Journal of Ethics*, no. 5 (2001), pp. 3-20.

[34] For a historical approach to the development of 'moral virtue' theories, see Alasdair MacIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics*, New York: Macmillan Company, 1966; Richard White, "Historical Perspectives on the Morality of Virtue," *The Journal of Value Inquiry*, Vol. 25 (1991), pp. 217-31.

[35] Yearley, "Recent Work on Virtue," p. 5.

[36] For more details, see Alasdair MacIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1966), pp. 21-22. We will see that, as MacIntyre maintains, the credit is for Plato and Aristotle in establishing certain dimensions of any theory of the virtues.

[37] John Kekes in his *Moral Wisdom and Good Lives* has critically considered the Socratic understanding of good life and virtuous man. Criticizing Socrates' account of knowledge as the only virtue, he argues that there is a plurality of goods, and a plurality of good lives. See John Kekes, *Moral Wisdom and Good Lives*, Cornell University Press, 1995.

[38] See Nicholas Smith, "Some Thoughts about the Origins of Greek Ethics," *The Journal of Ethics*, no. 5 (2001), pp. 13-14.

[39] See Alasdair MacIntyre, "Virtue Ethics," in *Encyclopedia of Ethics*, vol. 2 (New York: Garland Publishing, 1992), p. 1276.

[40] See Nicholas Smith, "Some Thoughts about the Origins of Greek Ethics," *The Journal of Ethics*, no. 5 (2001), p. 17.

[41] W. L. Reese, ed., *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion* (Humanities Press: New Jersey 1980), p. 441.

[42] See Nicholas Smith, "Some Thoughts about the Origins of Greek Ethics," *The Journal of Ethics*, no. 5 (2001), pp. 15-16.

[43] *Ibid*., p. 17.

[44] *Ibid*., p. 17.

[45] There is a deep concern among some thinkers regarding the meaning and appropriate English substitution for the word '*eudaimonia'* to the extent that Nicolas Smith elucidates that there is no word in the English language, substituting the Aristotelian term of "*eudaimonia*." See Nicholas Smith, "Some Thoughts about the Origins of Greek Ethics," *The Journal of Ethics*, no. 5 (2001), p. 9. On the other hand, it is literally defined as "'having a good guardian spirit', i.e. the state of having an objectively desirable life, universally agreed by ancient philosophical theory and popular thought to be the supreme human good. This objective character distinguishes it from the modern concept of happiness, i.e. of a subjectively satisfactory life. Much ancient theory concerns the question of what constitutes the good life, e.g. whether virtue is sufficient for it, as Socrates and the Stoics held, or whether external goods such as good fortune are also necessary, as Aristotle maintained. Immoralists such as Thrasymachus (in Plato's *Republic*) sought to discredit morality by arguing that it prevents the achievement of eudaimonia, while its defenders (including Plato) argued that it is necessary and/or sufficient. The Kantian conception of morality binding on rational beings independently of their well-being was absent from Greek thought." See *Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, 1995. See also T. H. Irwin, "Stoic and Aristotelian Conceptions of Happiness," in M. Schofield and G. Striker (eds.), *The Norms of Nature* (Cambridge, 1986).

[46] See David Bostock, *Aristotle's Ethics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (2000), pp. 38-45.

[47] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics, Book II*, 1107 a8. See also David Bostock, *Aristotle's Ethics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (2000), pp. 38-45.

[48] See David Bostock, *Aristotle's Ethics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (2000), pp. 38-46.

[49] For a worthy consideration of the Aristotelian ideas of practices and of the relationship between external and internal goods, see Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue*, 2nd edition (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), pp. 187-91.

[50] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics, Book I*, 7-8. See also David Bostock, *Aristotle's Ethics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (2000), pp. 45-46.

[51] See T. K. Seung, "Virtues and Values: A Platonic Account," *Social Theory and Practice*, vol. 17, issue 2 (summer 1991), p. 231.

[52] See Nicholas Smith, "Some Thoughts about the Origins of Greek Ethics," *The Journal of Ethics*, no. 5 (2001), p. 18.

[53] See David Bostock, *Aristotle's Ethics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (2000), pp. 8-10.

[54] See Nicholas Smith, "Some Thoughts about the Origins of Greek Ethics," *The Journal of Ethics*, no. 5 (2001), p. 19.

[55] *Ibid*., p. 4.

[56] "From the Greek stoa ("porch"). A Graeco-Roman School of philosophy founded in 108 B. C. in Athens by Zeno of Citium, and developing its greatest influence in the Roman Empire where at one time it was the dominant intellectual influence." See W. L. Reese, ed., *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion* (Humanities Press: New Jersey 1980), p. 551.

[57] See Alasdair MacIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1966), p. 106.

[58] For a detailed argumentation in this regard, see Alasdair MacIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1966), pp. 104-7.

[59] Jacques Maritain, *Moral Philosophy* (Albany, N.Y.: AGI Books Inc., 1990), chapter 4, pp. 73-97. See also Alasdair MacIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1966), pp. 104-108.

[60] Forrest E. Baird (ed.), *From Plato to Nietzsche*, 2nd edition (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1997), p. 274.

[61] See Alasdair MacIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1966), p. 107.

[62] See Forrest Baird (ed.), *From Plato to Nietzsche*, 2nd edition (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1997), p. 275.

[63] W. L. Reese, ed., *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion* (Humanities Press: New Jersey 1980), p. 151.

[64] See Jacques Maritain, *Moral Philosophy*, chapter 4, pp. 73-97. See also Alasdair MacIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1966), p. 107. For more scholarly survey of the philosophy of both Stoics and Epicurus, see H. D. Hicks, *Stoic and Epicurean*, New York: Russell, 1961; and E. Zeller, *The Stoics, Epicureans and Sceptics*, London: Longmans, Green & Company, 1892.

[65] See Jacques Maritain, *Moral Philosophy*, chapter six, pp. 132-160.

[66] See R. Sorabji, "Mystical Experience in Plotinus and Augustine," *Time, Creation and the Continuum, theories in antiquity and the early middle ages*, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1983), 157-63.

[67] For the Neo-Platonic doctrine, as well as the Plotinus' philosophy and epistemology, see E. Brehier, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958; A. H. Armstrong, *The Architecture of the Intelligible Universe in the Philosophy of Plotinus*, Cambridge: The University Press, 1940; W. H. Inge, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, 2 volumes, London: Longmans, Green, 1929. See also *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, edited by Lloyd Gerson, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

[68] This metaphysical terminology, including the application of unity and multiplicity at the same time, has received a profound attention by the Modern Muslim philosophers such as Mullā Sadrā Shīrazī and Kāshānī. In the following chapters we pay more attention to this approach.

[69] Plotinus, *Enneads*, the Fifth Ennead, Second Tractate. I use the text Plotinus' *Enneads*, trans. S. Mackenna and B. S. Page, Pennsylvania: The Frankline Library, 1983.

[70] Plotinus, *Enneads*, the Sixth Ennead, Ninth Tractate. See also John Bussanich, "Plotinus' metaphysics of the One," in *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, edited by Lloyd Gerson, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 55-7.

[71] *Ibid*., the First Ennead, Sixth Tractate.

[72] *Ibid*., the Second Ennead, Ninth Tractate and The whole Fourth Enneads.

[73] *Ibid*., the First Ennead, Second Tractate.

[74] For Plotinus' understanding and usage of the term Dialectic (the upward way), see Plotinus, *Enneads*, the First Ennead, Third Tractate.

[75] In his *Enneads*, Plotinus, in several places, mentions the problem of virtue, its definition, its types, and its application in his entire system. See, for example, Second Tractate of the First Ennead.

[76] This is the last phrase of Plotinus' Second Tractate of the First Ennead, in which he has remarkably overlooked the notion of virtue and its place in his moral system.

[77] Plotinus has allocated one Tractate to the discussion of love. See Plotinus, *Enneads*, the Third Ennead, Fifth Tractate, pp. 175-183. We will consider his discussion about love in the following chapters.

[78] On the influence of neo-Platonism on Augustine, see Hannah Arendt, Love and Saint Augustine, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996.

[79] See R. Sorabji, "Mystical Experience in Plotinus and Augustine," *Time, Creation and the Continuum, theories in antiquity and the early middle ages*, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1983), pp. 157-63.

[80] For a full consideration of Augustine's philosophy, see E. Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine*, New York, 1960. See also Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, particularly the essay of Bonnie Kent, "Augustine's Ethics," pp. 205-233.

[81] W. L. Reese, ed., *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion* (Humanities Press: New Jersey 1980), p. 613. See also Hannah Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996.

[82] Augustine has his own understanding and interpretation of the term 'love' and particularly the concept of 'love of God.' This observation, as well as his view of the place of 'love of God' in a virtue-based morality, will be notably examined in the following chapters.

[83] See Bonnie Kent, "Augustine's Ethics," in Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 215.

[84] See Bonnie Kent, "Augustine's Ethics," in Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 206-209. Kent is narrating this demonstration from Augustine's Retract, I, I, 2.

[85] Here I have to clarify the application of so to speak 'Aristotle's theory' in particular and Aristotelianism in general. By using this terminology, I mean a broader meaning of Aristotelianism, the one that is clearly mentioned and explained by MacIntyre. See MacIntyre's *After Virtue*, pp. 58-59, 165-173. Aristotelianism or Aristotelian discipline is not merely a slavish tradition, rather, it is regarded as an intellectual creative label, in which the theory or terminology of Aristotle has been scholarly and intellectually examined and developed. For a fair discussion in this regard, see Cary J. Nederman, "The Meaning of "Aristotelianism" in Medieval Moral and Political Thought," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 57.4 (1996), pp. 563-585.

[86] See Ethel Albert, *Great Traditions in Ethics* (Belmont, California: Wadsworth, Inc., 1988), pp. 107-108.

[87] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, vol. 2, pp. 583-985. The version I am referring to here is St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (Five Volumes), English trans. by Fathers of the English Dominican Province, Westminster, Maryland: Christian Classics, 1981.

[88] See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, vol. 2, pp. 793-853.

[89] Alasdair MacIntyre, "Virtue Ethics," *Encyclopedia of Ethics*, ed. By Lawrence C. Becker, vol. 2 (New York: Garland Publishing, 1992), p. 1278.

[90] Although the date of Middle Ages is not definite, indeed by the 17th century we have seen a certain shift in the mode of philosophic thought. For more details, see W. L. Reese, ed., *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion* (Humanities Press: New Jersey 1980), pp. 346-7.

[91] Alasdair MacIntyre, "Virtue Ethics," *Encyclopedia of Ethics*, ed. By Lawrence C. Becker, vol. 2 (New York: Garland Publishing, 1992), p. 1278.

[92] It was St. Ambrose (c. 340-397) who introduced the term "cardinal virtues' after reading of Plato's classification in writing of Cicero. See W. L. Reese, ed., *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion* (Humanities Press: New Jersey 1980), p. 613. For more precisely consideration of the definition of cardinality, see also David S. Oderberg, "On the Cardinality of the Cardinal Virtues," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*," vol. 7, no. 3 (October 1999), pp. 305-322.

[93] Nevertheless, John Inglis argues that "though Aquinas is often presented as following Aristotle's *Nicomachean ethics* when treating moral virtue, yet Aquinas's conception of the highest good and its relation to the functional character of human activity led him to break with Aristotle by replicating each of the acquired moral virtues on an infused level." See John Inglis, "Aquinas's Replication of the Acquired Virtues: Rethinking the Standard Philosophical Interpretation of Moral Virtue in Aquinas," *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, vol. 27, no. 1 (Spring 1999), pp. 3-27.

[94] Alasdair MacIntyre, "Virtue Ethics," *Encyclopedia of Ethics*, ed. By Lawrence C. Becker, vol. 2 (New York: Garland Publishing, 1992), p. 1278.

[95] On the Aquinas's theory of the virtues, see Jean Porter, "The unity of the virtues and the ambiguity of goodness," *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, vol. 21, no. 1 (1994), pp. 137-163.

[96] "The natural law," for Aquinas, "is that code to which we incline by nature; the supernatural law of revelation complements but does not replace it." See Alasdair MacIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1966), p. 117. For an adequate discussion about the concept of law and its relationship to morality, particularly in Middle Ages, see F. C. French, "The Concept of Law in Ethics," *The Philosophical Review*, vol. 2, Issue 1 (Jan. 1893), pp. 35-53.

[97] See Alasdair MacIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1966), pp. 117-8.

[98] For the term 'Aristotelianism' see note # 85.

[99] W. L. Reese, ed., *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion* (Humanities Press: New Jersey 1980), p. 24.

[100] See Ralph McInerny, *A History of Western Philosophy*, vol. 2, part IV, chapter 1.

[101] See Ralph McInerny, *A History of Western Philosophy*, vol. 2, part IV, chapter 1. McInerny here clearly explains that "the thinkers of Islam, like their Christian counterparts, were bent on establishing a harmony between pagan philosophy and their religious beliefs. When Aristotle finally came into the West, he came together with the writings of his Arabian interpreters."

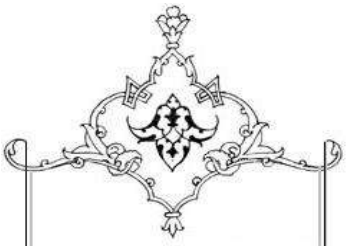
[102] For more remarkable points regarding the effectual role of Muslim thinkers in the Middle Ages and the transmission of Greek classics and Muslim thought from Arabic into Latin during the Medieval period, see Montgomery W. Watt, *The Influence of Islam on Medieval Europe*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1972. See also DeLacey O'Leary, *Arabic Thought and Its Place in History*, London, 1922; N. Rescher, "The Impact of Arabic Philosophy on the West," in *Studies in Arabic Philosophy* (Pittsburgh, 1966), pp. 147-158.

[103] See Alasdair MacIntyre, "Virtue Ethics," *Encyclopedia of Ethics*, ed. By Lawrence C. Becker, vol. 2 (New York: Garland Publishing, 1992), p. 1279.

[104] See J. B. Schneewind, *The Invention of Autonomy: A History of Modern Moral Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 286.

[105] MacIntyre explains that, at the beginning of modern moral philosophy, the question of virtue ethics was reopened in a new intellectual context. Then he elaborates a list of modern thinkers, who more or less relied on virtue oriented system in their moral theories. See Alasdair MacIntyre, "Virtue Ethics," *Encyclopedia of Ethics*, ed. By Lawrence C. Becker, vol. 2 (New York: Garland Publishing, 1992), p. 1279.

[106] The historical perspective I mention here is the Greek oriented heritage that highly considered by both Kāshānī and Malebranche. In the following chapters I will explain more about this influential heritage.



CHAPTER TWO

Kāshānī: Life, Works, Thought, and His Moral Theory

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I. Kāshānī's Life

Since it is not my primary purpose to emphasize the course of Kāshānī's life in any detail save that which is required for understanding the development of his thought, the following facts may suffice as biographical introduction. Muhammad Muhsin Fayd Kāshānī (1007/1598-1091/1680), Iranian Muslim philosopher, theologian, traditionist (*muhaddith*), interpreter of The Holy *Qurān*, jurist and poet of Safavid Persia, was born in 1598 in Kāshān, a city in Iran (Persia) some 480 Miles south of Tehran. Thesis

His father, Murtazā Kāshānī, was one of the greatest Muslim scholars of his time. Residing in Kāshān, Murtazā Kāshānī had a large library in the city and has been salient among the scholarly writers in that time.[1] The Kāshānī family was a long-standing clerical family in Kāshān that continued to produce respected *'ulamā* (scholars) down to the modern day.[2]

Under his father's patronage, Kāshānī, in his early age, received his elementary education and began to learn religious teachings with the help and supervision of his father. He entered the local Islamic seminary of Kāshān, where he studied theology, jurisprudence, Arabic language and literature.

In 1618, when he was 20, Kāshānī moved to Isfahan to pursue his studies and to join the Islamic seminary in that area. In Isfahan, he

visited some scholars and studied mathematics and other sciences. However, he heard about a very great scholar, Sayyed Majid Bahrānī, who lived in Shiraz. So Kāshānī moved to Shiraz to get knowledge from this Jurist (*faqīh*).

For two years in Shīrāz, he studied Jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and knowledge of tradition (*Ilmul Hadīth*). Then, in 1621, he returned to Isfahan to join the class of Sheikh Baha`ī, the greatest jurist of his time. According to Chittick, in Isfahan, Kāshānī studied *hadīth* with Bahā' al-Dīn 'Amilī XE "' milî, (d. 1030/1621) and probably at the same time he studied philosophy with Mīr Dāmād (d. 1041/1631.)[3]

In 1622, he journeyed to Mecca for the pilgrimage and then to Iraq. During his journey, Kāshānī visited some scholars in Najaf, a holy city in Iraq, which was the center of Shī`a seminary of that period. We don't have knowledge of the time he spent in Najaf; whether he attended any scholarly classes, or whom he visited, but he soon returned to Kāshān.

In 1623, Kāshānī moved to Qum,[4] a city near Kāshān, to attend the class of Mullā Sadrā Shīrazī. This was a significant event in Kāshānī's life.[5] He spent eight years in Qum to study with Mullā Sadrā, the most influential teacher in Kāshānī's scholarly life. In this regard Chittick maintains that, "he studied with a large number of teachers, but did not find the qualifications he was searching for until he met Mullā Sadrā in Qum." Under Mullā Sadrā's scholarly supervision, Kāshānī not only studied philosophy, theology, and mysticism, but also as Chittick states, "busied himself with spiritual discipline (*al-riyāda wa'l-mujāhada*) until he gained mystical insight."[6] When residing in Qum, Kāshānī became Mullā Sadrā's son in law and honored by him with the title fayd, meaning emanation and blessing.

Kāshānī along with his teacher, Mullā Sadrā, moved to Shiraz in 1631, and spent two more years with him. Then, in 1633, Kāshānī returned to Kāshān, his homeland, where he engaged in teaching,

research and writing in several fields, including philosophy, jurisprudence, theology and mysticism.[7]

Having been invited by King Safawi to become the top jurist of the capital, in 1656, Kāshānī moved to Isfahan which was the capital of Persia, and accepted the highest position of scholarship. Residing in Isfahan for almost twelve years, he held the highest authority in *fiqh* and on issuing *fatwas*. At the same time, Kāshānī continued his scholarly position by teaching several academic fields and writing some of his major works in the field of tradition (*hadīth*) and Jurisprudence, entitled *al-Wāfī*, and in the field of *tafsīr* and interpretation of the Holy Qurān, entitled *al-Sāfī*.

In 1668, Kāshānī returned to Kāshān and stayed there for the rest of his life. For almost 12 years in Kāshān, besides teaching the religious scholars and preaching to the community, Kāshānī found time to write several books and treatises and to complete his previous unfinished works. Finally, in 1680, Kāshānī, who was eighty two, died in Kāshān and was buried there.

What set this thinker apart? What shaped his education to inspire him to pursue the truth about God? The answer lies in the progression of his life. The similarities he shares with Malebranche in his development as a religious scholar stand as markers to contrast Malebranche and Kāshānī's radical conclusions about what it means to know God and to love God. In the following chapters, after we examine Malebranche's life and thought, we will revisit this question and shed more light on their specific concerns about love of God.

II. Kāshānī's Works

Kāshānī is considered one of the notable *Shī'ī* writers of the Safavid era in both Persian and Arabic. One of the contributions of Kāshānī to the Islamic sciences is his comprehensive works in different branches of theoretical and applied Islamic knowledge. He is also a

famous poet of his age whose poetry combines the richness of literature and depth of knowledge. As a great Persian poet, Kāshānī expressed much of his metaphysical teaching in didactic poetry.[8]In the course of his relatively long lifetime, Kāshānī produced a remarkable number of writings, covering a considerable range of topics. He is the author of at least 100 works in different areas including philosophy, morals (*akhlāq*), mysticism (*'irfān*), jurisprudence (*fiqh*), principles of jurisprudence (*usul al-fiqh*), Qur'ānic commentary (*tafsīr*), tradition (*hadīth)*, poetry, theology (*kalām*), and literature. Unfortunately it is often difficult to be sure of the dating of these various writings.

In what follows I shall not attempt to give an account of all of Kāshānī's works; but rather consider the major categories of these works. Kāshānī's two major works in *hadīth* (tradition) and *tafsīr* (commentary on the Holy Qurān) were written when he was in Isfahan. As a master in theology whether in the Islamic seminary or in the official position in Isfahan, Kāshānī's first responsibility was the theological exposition of the Holy Qurān and *Hadīth* (Prophet's traditions). So this position urged Kāshānī to present his two precious works in the fields of *hadīth* and *tafsīr*. He wrote *al-Wāfī* (*hadīth*) in 1659, which has recently been published in more than 20 volumes. Six years later, in 1665, he wrote and published *al-Sāfī*, Kāshānī's major work in *tafsīr*, which is lately published in 5 volumes. The former work has been written in Arabic and the later in Persian.

Kāshānī's major work in morality is his well-known Arabic text: *al-Mahajjah al-Baydā`*[9] which is considered to be the best representative of his moral system. It seems that this very valuable work took him many years, but its writing was completed in the year 1638, when he was residing in Kāshān and after he returned home from Qum. In this work Kāshānī mostly quoted Ghazālī, the Muslim thinker whose moral theology formed the principal guideline for Kāshānī's ethical framework. As explained in his Introduction, Kāshānī in *al-Mahajjah* which is a comprehensive series in morals, has basically revived *Ihyā' al-'Ulūm* of Ghazālī, omitting some parts and

adding some traditions according to *Shī'a* views and sayings of the *Shī'a* religious leaders.[10]

In this research, I would like to have more concerns about Kāshānī's *al-Mahajjah*, because this work not only reflects Kāshānī's moral system, but also illuminates his understanding of moral virtue, as well as the virtue of love of God. Furthermore, this work is very close and comparable to Ghazālī's major work in ethics, *Ihya`*. While comparing these two ethical works, which have been developed in different theological backgrounds, a recent historian said, "in the same way that the *Ihyā'* is the outstanding work about *Sūfi*[11] ethics in the *Sunnī* setting, the *al-Mahajja al-Bayda`* must be considered as one of the most important *Shī'ī* works about ethics with a *Sufi* orientation."[12]

As one may gather, Ghazālī wrote *Ihyā'* because he wanted to guide people who were heedless of their future and the hereafter.[13] In the same way, Kāshānī speaks about why he started working on *Ihyā*'. First he praises, *Ihyā*' saying "a book like this is necessary for people. It is beneficial for educated and ordinary people to be reminded of the contents of it, especially during this time when ignorance is everywhere and misleading can be seen all round."[14]

In this research, I have chosen one aspect of Kāshānī's ethical theory, which is specific and at the same time central, and that is virtue. Kāshānī's ethics or moral theory, like most of the classical ethical theories, is an ethics of virtue. In his major ethical works, the *al-Mahajjah* and the *al-Haqā`iq*, Kāshānī devotes a great deal of attention to the definition and analysis of virtues. Thus Kāshānī's theory of virtue becomes the key to understanding his ethics.

III. Kāshānī's Thought

Similar to the 16/17th centuries in the history of Western philosophy, which coincides with the tenth century on the Islamic calendar, the period of Kāshānī was also a critical time in the

development of Islamic philosophy. Outside influences from Aristotelianism, Platonism, neo Platonism (Plotinus), Traditionalism, and Sufism (`*Irfan*) had crept in on the heels of the two major lines of philosophical thought, *Mashshā*`(representing the philosophy of Ibn Sīnā) and *Ishrāq* (representing the illuminating philosophy of Suhrawardī).[15] For a long time, there was a deep debate between the followers of the two philosophical schools. Intellectual thought in Islam needed scholars within its rank who could temper the rational aspect of Greek philosophies with the spiritual substance of Mystical intuition on the one hand, and extract the truth from tradition and religious scripture, developing and applying these truths in an articulate manner, on the other.

The main task was taken up by Mullā Sadrā Shīrazī, and later followed and developed by Kāshānī. Mullā Sadrā's renowned bridge between philosophy and mysticism, rationalism and traditionalism, orthodoxy and modernism was merely a logical way to seek the truth and to advance the multi-disciplinary path through the philosophical ground. Following his teacher, Kāshānī used the various disciplines of the academia as stepping stones to attaining fulfillment in the knowledge of God and love of God as the two means for final human accomplishment.

As categorized in the fourth period of Islamic thought, Kāshānī belongs to the period of the Safavid Renaissance and of the school of Isfahan with Mīr Dāmād (d.1631) and Mullā Sadrā Shīrazī (d. 1640).

Henry Corbin states that this period is a phenomenon which has no parallel elsewhere in Islam. Kāshānī and his teachers, Corbin adds, "consider the excellence of their religious perspective to reside in the indissoluble unity of *pistis* and *gnosis*, of prophetic revelation and the philosophical intelligence which deepens the esoteric meaning of such a revelation."[16]

In another approach pertaining to the Islamic intellectual framework, Muslim thinkers can be classified into four dominant

categories: Theologians (*Mutakallimūn*), Peripatetics (*Mashshā`ūn*), Illuminationists (*Ishrāqīyūn*), and Mystics (*Sūfīs*).[17] All of these four groups of Islamic thought, more or less, dealt with the question of morality, utilizing several languages and different methodological demonstrations. These four major schools of intellectual development, as well as the traditional context, united in a vast synthesis to form a new school of philosophy (*hikma*) called the "transcendent theosophy" (*al-hikmat al-muta'ālīya*)[18] by its well-known author Mullā Sadrā Shīrāzī.[19]

Mullā Sadrā tried to establish a system of philosophy to reconcile separate doctrines in Muslim thought, namely the peripatetic tradition (*al-mashshā`īyya*) represented by Fārābī (d. 339/950) and Ibn Sīnā (d. 428/1037), the illuminationist tradition (*al-ishrāqīyya*) of Suhrawardī (d.587/1191), the mystical thought (*al-'irfān*) represented by Ibn al-'Arabī (d.638/1240), and the classical tradition of theology (*kalām*) which had already entered its philosophical phase by Nasīr al-Dīn Tūsī (d.672/1273). He also adequately considered the works of Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī (d.606/1209) to the extent that, according to F. Rahman, Rāzī was Mullā Sadrā's most persistent target.[20]

Mullā Sadrā's philosophy has so profoundly influenced Kāshānī's philosophical system that as Mutahhari remarks, all of the philosophical works by Kāshānī are the same ideas as his teacher Mullā Sadrā but in a condensed form.[21] Therefore, in our following approach to the philosophical and metaphysical doctrine of Kāshānī as a fundamental ground for his moral system, we have to consider the influential role of Mullā Sadrā's thought.

Following the Mullā Sadrā's synthesis of philosophical field notes, Kāshānī attempted harmonize rational and traditional resources in his theoretical procedure, particularly his moral system. He relies on and uses both rational resources through philosophical reasoning, and traditional literature that is narrated through revelation. As Nasr indicates, Kāshānī's writings exhibit a harmonious integration of reason, revelation and gnosis with lesser emphasis upon reason.[22] It is

true indeed that Kāshānī's works represent his tendency towards the traditional part of this integration rather than reasoning one.

However, one may not conclude that Kāshānī relied less on reason than the other sources in his system of thinking. Kāshānī's method of argumentation in his philosophical works, as well as his theological and moral writings resembles his teacher's. In his argument, Kāshānī used to first present a reasoning proof and then elaborate with other proof from Islamic tradition or mysticism.[23] However, in the construction of his ethical system, Kāshānī added another resource to his disciplinary basket, and that was, Ghazālī's line of thinking.

It has been demonstrated that Kāshānī was a follower of the school of Ghazālī in his moral theology.[24] As Khansārī says, the school of Ghazālī is seen in most of Kāshānī's works.[25] The two ethical works, *Ihyā'* and *al-Mahajjah al-Baydā'*, seem to be of the same monumental proportions. I am not here to compare these two Muslim figures; nevertheless, it might be noted that they are different in more than one way. Kāshānī not only substituted traditions drawn from *Shī'ī* sources for the *Sunnī* ones but also omitted many parts which he deemed irrelevant.[26] This demonstrates some of the differences between these two thinkers.

Under Mullā Sadrā, Kāshānī busied himself with spiritual discipline (*al-riyādah wa'l-mujāhada*), until he gained mystical insight. Influenced by the philosophy of Mullā Sadrā, which is the most dominant philosophy in the Muslim world today,[27] Kāshānī seems to be one of the successors of Mullā Sadrā and one of those who augmented Mullā Sadrā's thought. Furthermore, Kāshānī, also a famous figure in the field of *Hadīth* (Prophetic tradition), has developed a way to comprehend and interpret *ahadīth*. In addition, as a mystic and moral theologian, Kāshānī studied and criticized Muslim and non-Muslim thinkers and developed both methodological and contextual elements of moral theology. As indicated in the Introduction of *Usūl al-Ma`ārif,* his major work in metaphysics and philosophy,

Kāshānī confirms that he profoundly contemplated variety of methodological and disciplinary features.[28] Next, we will have a brief but hopefully beneficial glance at his metaphysical principles that have played some role in his moral system.

In his metaphysical viewpoint, Kāshānī, like his master Mullā Sadrā, maintains that being or existence is the primary concept that the mind acquires; it is therefore, self-evident and indefinable.[29] In his theory of essence and existence, Kāshānī holds that in all the contingents, namely everything else except God, there is a distinction between their essence and their existence, because their existence is not necessary and depends upon God, the necessary being. Unlike all created contingents, that have a duality of essence (*māhīyah*) and existence (*wujūd*), God is pure existence and has no essence.[30] Relying on the mystical terminology, Kāshānī refers all kinds of existence to a unique, simple and pure existence referred to by Kāshānī as the only Reality and the only real Being. This theory is called the theory of *wahdat al-wujūd*, which is originated from Ibn `Arabī's mystical doctrine and developed by Mullā Sadrā and accepted by Kāshānī.[31] According to this theory, there is only one real existent, that is God, and the other things are the manifestations (*tajallīyāt*) of that Reality. These *tajallīyāt* have been bestowed as the Divine Names and Attributes (*asmā` wa sifāt ilāhī*), if we are to use the mystical language.[32]

Based on the doctrine of *wahdat al-wujūd* (oneness or uniqueness of existence), Kāshānī, following the doctrine of Mullā Sadrā, develops the theory of *tashkīk al-wujūd*, that is the hierarchy of existence, or the systematic ambiguity of existence.[33] Thanks to the efforts of Mullā Sadrā, this theory demonstrates that *wujūd* (existence) is One and graded, being equivocal or ambiguous with respect to the doctrine of 'more perfect and less perfect.'[34]

Thereupon, for Kāshānī, the highest point in this gradation is God, who is absolute existence and hence has no essence (*māhīyah*) and is not amenable to conceptual thought at all.[35] Here, Kāshānī

follows Mullā Sadrā in that existence (*wujūd*) is not structured within static grades or levels of being, but rather moving from the lowest level towards the highest. The driving force of this universal movement is *`ishq*,[36] or cosmic love, which impels everything towards a more concrete form.

As we see here, Kāshānī has clearly adhered to the mystical language to explore the development of existence through the hierarchical grades. Based on this doctrine, they maintain that each of the intellectually and spiritually perfected members of the human species will become a species unto himself in the hereafter.[37]

On the other hand, according to Kāshānī, the higher form of contingent existence contains all the lower forms in itself in a simple manner. Therefore, the perfect man (*al-insan al-kamil*) both contains and sustains the entire universe.[38] The higher then emerges from the lower but in turn sustains the lower and becomes the cause of its continual existence. At the point of the emergence of the perfect man, the contingent realm enters the Divine. The perfect man becomes analogous to or part of the transcendental intelligences which are nothing other than parts of the godhead. This provides us a fundamental base for the critical issue of God-man relationship, which is the keystone in Kāshānī's love-based morality. In chapter 4, we will further examine the God-man relationship.

Kāshānī insists that existence is nothing but good (*khair*) and absolute existence is absolute good (*al-khair al-mahd*). According to Kāshānī the gradation theory is applicable to goodness as well. Thus, whatever possesses a stronger or a higher level of existence (*wujūd*) would possess a higher and more complete goodness. Therefore, evil is never absolute but only relative, partial, negative, and arises out of partial existence.[39] For Kāshānī, evil does not exist by its essence, yet it exists by an accidental being (*wujūdi bil`araz*).[40]

In his psychology, Kāshānī believes in the duality of soul and body. Human soul in essence is free from matter and capable of

existence independently of the body. However, soul in its function cannot be separate and independent of the body. Human soul, as the entelechy of a material body, operates through its faculties, which are not independent from the soul. Kāshānī here uses his master's language to determine the nature of soul's faculties. For Kāshānī, like Mullā Sadrā, faculties are the modes (*shu`ūn*) or manifestations (*mazāhir*) of the human soul. Consequently, this doctrine leads Kāshānī to the psychological principle that "the soul in its unity is all of its faculties (*al-nafs fī wahdatihā kull al-quwā*)."[41] Regarding the relationship between soul and body, Kāshānī accepts the theory of his master, Mullā Sadrā, when he says: "the soul is bodily in its origin but spiritual in its survival (*al-nafs Jismānīyah al-hudūth wa rūhānīyah al-baqā*')"[42]

Finally, Kāshānī's specific attention to the end of all types of knowledge (*ma`rifah*) and the result of human reflection, which adopts or ends with a mystical-intuitive illumination confirms that ethics in general, and the relationship with God in particular is one of the central themes in his doctrine. As we will see, in his view the ultimate end of mysticism is the vision of God and loving Him.

Therefore, the core of Kāshānī's mystical doctrine can ultimately be derived from his ethical understanding. For this reason, I prefer to study the unity of Kāshānī's ethical system as set forth in his principal writings.

To close this part of the discussion, I would conclude that Kāshānī's metaphysical discipline, which is methodologically and contextually a synthesis of certain doctrines - i.e. philosophical, mystical, theological and traditional - provides a rudimentary ground for his moral system. When we approach Kāshānī's morality, we have to scrutinize it in the context of Kāshānī's theosophy (*hikmah*), the philosophy that seems more neo-Platonic than Aristotelian. Now the fundamental question here is how Kāshānī fabricated his Aristotelian virtue based morality within a more neo-Platonic philosophy.

IV. Kāshānī's Moral theory: Virtue Ethics

Like many if not all ethical theories and religious systems, the moral theology of Islam has been historically challenged to deal with the major questions and find appropriate answers. The two central questions for most ethical writers in Islam as well as many moralists and moral theologians, are the nature and the conditions of virtue[43] and the attainment of happiness.

In this chapter, my aim is neither to examine the historical challenges in detail, nor to consider the practical ways of achieving final happiness. Rather, I will attempt to first look at the historical development of virtue ethics in Islam from the beginning (seventh century) to the time of Kāshānī (seventeenth century). Then, I will analyze the principle of *virtue* as a fundamental basis and key notion of the Islamic literature, as well as that of Kāshānī's moral system.

To accurately understand the term "virtue" in general, and its certain application by Kāshānī's terminology in particular, one has to consider its historical development as well as the variety of observations which have been examined in various contexts. Furthermore, a close consideration to the historical background helps us to understand the major philosophical, as well as epistemological elements which lead Kāshānī to construct his moral theory. However, the question of the place of virtue in Islamic moral theology may not be thoroughly illustrated here. Rather, I should simply like to offer some reflections that may help us understand and discover the true nature and usage of the concept of virtue within the Islamic context, and particularly its rightful role in the making of an Islamic moral doctrine.

The history of morality in Islam, like many other religions, is as long as the history of Islam itself. It is absolutely true that Islamic

ethics and practice originate from the Holy Qurān.[44] However, Islamic moral discipline and the notion of *virtue* could be examined within the context of tradition, theology, philosophy, and mysticism and from several perspectives within the realm of the history of Islamic thought. Besides these intellectual disciplines, the ancient Greek heritage is regarded as a background and reference for the historical development of the Islamic Ethics. In this regard, De Boer holds that,

> "Greek philosophic inquiries have had a two-fold influence upon the Ethics of Islam. With many of the sectaries and mystics, both orthodox and heretic, an ascetic system of ethics is found, colored by Pythagorean-Platonic views… But in orthodox circles, the Aristotelian deliverance, that virtue consists in the just mean, found much acceptance because something similar stood in the Koran, and because generally the tendency of Islam was a catholic one, one conciliatory of opposites."[45]

Historically, ethics (*`ilm al-akhlāq*) in Islam might not be encountered as an independent science. Muslims mostly found their moral doctrine in the legal schools, or in some philosophical and/or theological sources, or even in some mythical literature.[46] One of the major area in which the knowledge of right and wrong has been deeply considered is the Islamic Divine Law.[47] In the Islamic law, one may apply detailed moral solutions to the problems of his daily life. The discussion of moral characters, the observation of noble behaviors, the examination of ethical virtues, and the elaboration of a daily moralistic life could be found in various sources such as Islamic tradition, philosophical works, legislative writings, theological resources, and other Islamic literature. In this regard, Hourani states that the study of ethical principles in the Islamic religious tradition starts with the jurists' discussions of the sources of Divine law (*sharī`ah*) in the eighth and ninth centuries.[48] However, we may interpret this statement in a more acceptable way. We may say that the principles of ethics were observed and discussed theoretically and systematically for the

first time by jurists. However, the discussion of ethics especially practical implication started from the beginning of Islamic history, about mid-seventh century.

The variety of grounds and resources for moral observations in Islam urge some contemporary writers to classify the moral theories in Islam into four types. As Fakhry remarks,[49] the types of ethical theories in the Islamic thought may be given under four principal headings: 1. Scriptural morality which relies on the Holy Qurān and the Traditions (*hadīth*); 2. Theological theories with their ultimate grounding in the Holy Qurān and the Traditions; 3. Philosophical theories stemming ultimately from the ethical writings of Plato and Aristotle, as interpreted in late antiquity by Neo-Platonic thinkers; 4. Religious theories grounded ultimately in the Qurānic conception of man and his position in the universe. Through the history of Islamic morality, these four lines have had their own representative(s).[50]

Although, in his work, Fakhry attempted to give some reasons for his classification and to convince us of his argumentation regarding the different lines of ethical theories, it remains difficult to distinguish and cast the Muslim moralists into such distinct types. In many cases, as Fakhry himself recognizes, the Muslim thinkers used to examine different sorts of resources and elaborate certain methodological styles. Our figure, Kāshānī, for instance, did not confine himself to just one type of theoretical and practical line of thinking. In our further discussion in this chapter, we will see that Kāshānī, in both his methodological and contextual observations, used to rely on a synthesis of styles.

As I understand from his works, it is not easy to fit Kāshānī's theory of morality within a single frame which could be identified as a rational or traditional pattern. It is more appropriate to assume Kāshānī's system as a synthesis in which certain rational and traditional elements have their own role in his scholarly pattern of thought. To recognize this synthesis, one has to examine his philosophical and traditional background. As we have seen before,

there are two lines of thinking that had the main influential effect on Kāshānī's moral system, Mullā Sadrā's philosophy[51] and Ghazālī's moral theology.[52] It is suitable to remark here that unlike Ibn Sīnā, Ibn Rushd and Ghazālī, Mullā Sadrā's works were not translated into Latin and therefore, Mullā Sadrā has remained largely unknown to the West.[53]

We realize that the morality of Kāshānī is not only influenced by the philosophical line of his teacher, Mullā Sadrā, but also was formed and affected by Ghazālī's theological morality. Kāshānī used to rely on almost the same moral principles that had been employed by Ghazālī.[54] The principle of *virtue* is one of those elements that was highly considered by both. It is not easy to fully contemplate their system without being aware of the role of *virtue* in their moral theories. Now, let us view the principle or notion of *virtue* in Kāshānī's morality.

Kāshānī's morality, like many Muslim thinkers, has been highly affected by the Islamic traditional and textual identity. In the Islamic tradition, namely the Holy Qurān and the Prophetic narration, the technical term *virtue* (*fadīlah*) has played a significant role, not only in shaping a virtue-based moral system, but also in establishing the criteria for evaluating moral actions and behaviors. On the other hand, Kāshānī is highly influenced by ancient Greek literature and employs the Aristotelian terminology in shaping his ethical system. In fact, one may claim that the atmosphere of ethical thought and moral theories in the period of Medieval Islamic philosophy was dominated by and connected closely with classical Greek philosophy.[55] Kāshānī was not an exception. We see the same general vocabulary as well as technical language used in the Greek literature, particularly by Plato and Aristotle, have also been used by Kāshānī in several places.

In his major book on ethics, *al-Mahajjah*, Kāshānī begins the discussion of virtue with what he calls 'principal virtues.' They are listed as wisdom (*hikmah*), courage (*shajā`ah*), temperance (*`iffah*), and justice (*`adālah*).[56] These virtues and the other derivative virtues

are identical with their counterparts in the Greek philosophic tradition, especially in Plato and Aristotle.[57]

In discussing the acquisition of virtue, Kāshānī emphasizes the importance of habituation. Moreover, Kāshānī considers habit (*`ādah*) as the decisive factor in the acquisition of virtue by the majority of mankind; asserting that virtue is a habit, a good habit influenced by both reason and revelation.[58] According to Kāshānī, habit can create almost a second nature.[59] To acquire virtue, man must practice good deeds so that they become habits for him. Such practice and performance emphasize the importance of action (*`amal*) in acquiring and preserving virtue.[60]

A major point which divides Kāshānī and Aristotle is their account of the highest virtue. Both have elaborated the highest virtue in their rating the virtues. Aristotle, as well as his predecessors Socrates and Plato, determined that wisdom which is a more genuine form of knowledge is the highest virtue. But Kāshānī identifies the love of God, which is a virtue that springs from such knowledge, as the highest virtue. In the following chapters, we will further discuss Kāshānī's understanding of the virtue of love of God as the highest virtue and the final end.[61]

In describing the nature of virtue, Kāshānī relies on the same method employed by Aristotle, namely the doctrine of the mean. Good character or virtue, according to this doctrine lies between the two opposite characters. This discussion of the doctrine of the mean concludes Kāshānī's treatment of moral virtue in general.[62]

Kāshānī, in *al-Mahajjah*, continues his discussion of virtues with statement which introduces and defines every virtue and then explains them one by one.[63] According to Kāshānī, there are only four principal virtues, wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice; all other virtue enumerated by Kāshānī are subordinated to these principal virtues.[64] Kāshānī's classification of virtues is almost the same as Aristotle's. Nevertheless, Kāshānī having accepted the Aristotelian

framework, added other virtues such as the virtue of love of God.[65] Examining the virtues presented by Kāshānī in light of the Greek tradition, one may see some changes that resulted when a thinker like Kāshānī tried to reconcile Greek moral philosophy with the basic tenets of religious and mystical illuminations. We see the same with respect to Christianity when, as we discussed in the previous chapter, St. Thomas, for example, added some virtues to the Aristotle's list as theological virtues.

Studying virtue in Kāshānī's moral discipline is one aspect and of course the main aspect of his system. However, when we examine Kāshānī's moral system, we have to consider certain things as related issues which make his theory as a chain. The goal of human life – which is pleasure for Kāshānī – the role of God-man relationship, and the best means to achieve that goal are the three principles Kāshānī relies on in his moral system. For Kāshānī, the final goal of moral life and the highest level of pleasure is nearness to Allah (God);[66] and the relationship between Allah and man plays a significant role in the structure of morality, and finally the best mean to achieve the final goal is to achieve moral virtues. Although, out of these three main elements to Kāshānī's moral system, the subject of our discussion is *virtue*, without having a look at the other elements, our understanding of Kāshānī's account of *virtue* would not be accurate. It is remarkable that most of Kāshānī's elaboration here have their source in the Holy Qurān and Islamic Tradition (*Ahadīth*).[67]

The higher grade of happiness, as Kāshānī remarks, consists of nearness to Allah (God), and gazing upon His glorious face for evermore. The pleasure of vision of God or encounter with Him is the highest happiness, the ultimate good and the last of all forms of God's bounty.[68] This grade is attainable by the highest level of achieving *virtue*. Therefore, perfection, which comes through *virtue*, is the same as nearness to Allah.[69]

The mystical or intuitive relationship between God and man also has its own significant role in Kāshānī's moral theory. This

relationship, which leads man to the Divine nearness, is produced by love;[70] and love is produced by knowledge and action (*`ilm* and *`amal*).[71] Man in this life has been urged to love God and to promote this love through performing more duties and obtaining higher level of knowledge (ma*`rifah*).[72] The more an act promotes this love, the greater is its moral worth. To love God more than any other is enough, but perfect love is very intense and is called passionate love (*`ishq*).[73] This love is equivalent to attainment of the highest perfection, nearness to Allah (God). When such a relationship between man and God develops, he experiences the state of annihilation (*fanā`*)[74] and hence this state is sometimes called by Kāshānī the goal of the moral life.[75] In the following chapters, I will extensively discuss Kāshānī's understanding and interpretation of the notion love of God.

So far, we have seen that how these three elements operate together in Kāshānī's moral theory. Through these three principles, Kāshānī elaborates his systematic ethics to present a practical prescription for human moral life. Of course, there are different levels for each of these elements. A certain level of virtue, for example, attained through a specific grade of God-man relationship can lead the virtuous man to a certain grade of God-nearness. To elevate from one level to the other, one has to fulfill more moral actions and obtain the higher level of virtue. Finally, perfection, which refers to a higher grade of *virtue* (*Fadīlat*), will cause a higher level of happiness.

To sum up this chapter, one may argue that Kāshānī has employed the principle of *virtue* to fulfill his moral theory. The way he explains this fulfillment could be summarized as the following. The highest goal of human moral life is eternal happiness and pleasure. This happiness is obtained by nearness to the Almighty Allah. The nearness is achievable through love which is promoted by knowledge and action. Through *virtue*, man is able to fulfill more moral actions, promote his love, purify his soul, develop his relationship with God, and attain the human perfection which leads him to a higher level of nearness to Allah (God). By obtaining this nearness, a virtuous man is

able to reach eternal happiness and pleasure. Furthermore, based on Kāshānī's moral system, humankind can achieve eternal happiness by developing moral virtues in both action and character, while, on the other side, moral corruption and vices lead him to everlasting wretchedness. Therefore, it is necessary for man to purge and purify himself of all evil character traits and adorn his soul with all forms of ethical virtues, including the love of God.

Now we come to some closing questions. What is the role of "love of God" in Kāshānī's virtue-based ethical system? How can "love of God," as the basis of all moral virtues, form and develop the entire system in Kāshānī's moral theory? And finally, what are the similarities and differences between Kāshānī's and Malebranche's understanding and interpretation of the above mentioned questions?

Chapter 4 will deal with the first and second questions, while chapter 6 will illustrate some considerations and examinations of the third question.

Kāshānī's Time Line
1598-1680

1598 Born in Kāshān, a central city of Iran (Persia), to Murtazā Kāshānī, one of the greatest Muslim scholar of his time.
1614 Studies theology, jurisprudence, Arabic language and literature at the seminary in Kāshān.
1618 Moves to Isfahan to join the greatest seminary of his time.
1619 Moves to Shiraz and studies jurisprudence under Majīd Bahrānī.
1621 Returns to Isfahan to join Sheikh Bahā`ī's class of *fiqh* and *hadith*.

1622 His journey to Mecca for pilgrimage and to Iraq. He visits some scholars in Najaf.

1623 Moves to Qum (very close to Kāshān) to attend the class of Mullā Sadrā Shīrazī. He spends the next eight years studying with Mullā Sadrā. He becomes Mullā Sadrā's son-in-law.

1631 Moves with his teacher, Mullā Sadrā, to Shiraz and spends two more years with him.

1633 Returns to Kāshān, teaching, researching and writing in several fields such as Jurisprudence, Tafsir, Mysticism, Theology, Philosophy and Ethics.

1638 Writes *al-Mahajjah al-Baydā`*, his major work in ethics.

1656 Having been invited by the King Safawi, he moves to Isfahan (Persia's Capital) and accepts the highest position of scholarship.

1659 Writes *al-Wafi*, his main work in Tradition and Jurisprudence.

1665 Writes *al-Safi*, his major work in Tafsir and Interpretation of the Holy Quran.

1668 Returns to Kāshān. Beside teaching and preaching to the community, he writes his major works at this time.

1680 Dies in Kāshān.

Notes:

[1] Unfortunately there are few sources and references in English about Kāshānī's life. However, W. C. Chittick has a short article about Kāshānī, and Seyyed Hossein Nasr, in his essay on the philosophy of Persia, has briefly mentioned Kāshānī and his works. See Chittick, "Muhsin-iý Fayd-i Kāshānī," in E. J. Brill, The Encyclopaedia of Islam, new ed., vol. 7 (New York: Leiden, 1993), P. 476; S. H. Nasr, "The School of Isfahān," in M. Sharif, ed., A History of Muslim Philosophy (Kempten (Germany): Allgāuer Heimatverlag GmbH., 1966), vol. 2, p. 926. We may find some sources in the Arabic and Persian languages. For example, see Nasrabadi's Introduction to Kāshānī's Fehresthaye Khodnewesht (Kāshānī's Self Bibliography), Mashhad, 1998; Quchani's Introduction to Kāshānī's Kalimāti

Maknūnah, Tehran, 1980; Ghaffari's Introduction to Kāshānī's al-Mahajjah al-Bayda`, Tehran, 1972.

[2] W. C. Chittick, "Muhsin-iý Fayd-i Kāshānī," in E. J. Brill, *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, New E., vol. 7 (New York: Leiden, 1993), p. 475.

[3] *Ibid*., p. 476.

[4] At the time of Kāshānī, the city of Qum was not the principal center of Shī`a scholars. However, Qum is presently assumed as the main center for Islamic seminary in Shī`a world.

[5] Obviously, Mullā Sadrā is one of the most, if not the most, important and influential teachers of Kāshānī. In this regard, Kāshānī says that he studied with a large number of teachers, but did not find the qualifications he was looking for until he met Mullā Sadrā in Qum (1033/1623-24, or 1034/1624-25) and that he remained under Mullā Sadrā until he gained a clear vision of the various esoteric sciences. See William C. Chittick, "Two Seventeenth-Century Persian Tracts on Kingship and Rulers," in Said Amir Arjomand (ed.), *Authority and Political Culture in Shi'ism* (NY: State University of New York Press, 1988), p. 267, from: Muhammad ibn Murtada Fayd Kāshānī, *al-Mahajjah al-Baydā' fī Ihyā' al-Ihyā'*; ed. by S.M. Mishkāt, (Tehran: al-Maktabat al-Islamiyya, 1339-40/1960-61), vol. 3, p. 6. Chittick, "Two Seventeenth..," p. 267, from Kāshānī, *al-Mahajjah*, edited by Mishkāt, vol. 3, p. 6.

[6] See Chittick, "Two Seventeenth …," p. 267. See also Kāshānī, *al-Mahajja*, vol. 4, p. 476.

[7] See Chittick, "Muhsin-i ý Fayd-i Kāshānī," in E. J. Brill (ed.), *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed., vol. 7 (New York: Leiden, 1993), p. 475.

[8] See S. H. Nasr, "The Significance of Persian Philosophical Works in the Tradition of Islamic Philosophy," in George F. Hourani (ed.), *Essays on Islamic Philosophy and Science* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1975), p. 72.

[9] It has been edited by S. M. Mishkat and published in 4 vols. by al-Maktabat al-Islamiyya, Tehran, Iran, in 1960-61.

[10] See Kāshānī's Introduction on his *al-Mahajjah al-Baydā' fī Tahdhīb al-Ihyā'* (MB), Qum: Daftar-i Intishārāti Islāmī, 1980.

[11] On the term of *Sufi* and *Sufism*, as well as its doctrine, see S. H. Nasr, *Sūfī Essays,* Albany: SUNY Press, 1991.

[12] Peter Jackson et al (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Iran*, (vols. 6), London: Cambridge U. Press, 1986,vol. 6, p. 689.

[13] Abū Hāmid Mohammad Ghazālī, *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, Beirut: Dār al-Khayr, 1990, vol. 1, p. 7.

[14] See Kāshānī's Introduction on his *al-Mahajjah al-Baydā' fī Tahdhīb al-Ihyā'* Qum: Daftar-i Intishārāti Islāmī, 1980.

[15] For a full discussion on *Mashshā`* and *Ishrāq*, see S. H. Nasr and O.Leaman (eds.), *History of Islamic Philosophy*, 2 volumes, New York, 1996; S. M. R. Hejazi, *Knowledge by Presence (al-`ilm al-huduri): A Comparing Study Between Suhrawardī and Mullā Sadrā Shīrazī* (M.A. Thesis), Montreal, Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, 1995; Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullā Sadrā*, Albany: SUNY Press, 1976; M. M. Sharif (ed.), *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, 2 vols., Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1963. I would like to remark that the term *Mashshā`* is used for the followers of Aristotle and the term *Ishrāq* is employed for the followers of Plato.

[16] Henry Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1993), p. 34.

[17] For further information about the development of Islamic philosophy see: F. Rahman, "Islamic philosophy," *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. P. Edwards, vol. 4 (New York, London: Macmillan, 1967), pp. 219-224; S.H. Nasr, "Mullā Sadrā," *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, vol. 5, p. 412; *Sadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī and His Transcendent Theosophy*, pp. 85-94; Majid Fakhrī, *A History of Islamic Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), pp. 341-46.

[18] The term "transcendent theosophy" as an appropriate translation for Mullā Sadrā's al-hikmat al-muta'ālīya has been used by a number of leading scholars of Islamic philosophy who have written on him in European languages, such as Henry Corbin, S. H. Nasr, and Toshihiko Izutsu. See S.H.Nasr and O.Leaman (eds.), *History of Islamic philosophy*, chapter 36. For more details and Nasr's response to the scholars' protests with regard to the using such a term, see his footnote # 4.

[19] In this regard, Nasr states: "Sadr al-Dīn Mohammad al-Shīrāzī (979-1050/1571-1640), commonly known as Mullā Sadrā, is the greatest philosopher-theosopher of the Safavid period in Iran." For more information of his time, as well as his intellectual personality see: S.H. Nasr, *Islamic Life and Thought* (London: Boston, Allen & Unwin, 1981), pp. 158-181; "The Metaphysics of Sadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī and Islamic Philosophy in Qajar Iran," in *Qajar Iran*, ed. by E. Bosworth (California, 1992), pp. 177-98; "Theology, philosophy and spirituality," in *Islamic Spirituality*, ed. S.H.Nasr (N.Y., 1991); F. Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullā Sadrā* (Albany, SUNY Press, 1976); M. Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy* (N.Y., 1970), pp. 339-46. In the present work, Sadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī is often referred to as Mullā Sadrā or Sadr al-Muta`allihīn (the head of theosophers).

[20] F. Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullā Sadrā* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1976), p. 8. See also S. H. Nasr, "Mullā Sadrā as a Source for the History of Islamic Philosophy",in *Islamic Life and Thought* (albany, 1981):169ff.

[21] M. Mutahharī, *Khadamāt-i Mutaqābil-i Islām wa Irān* (Tehran: Daftar-i Nashr-i Farhang-i Islāmī, 1975), vol. 2, p. 632.

[22] S. Hossein Nasr, "The School of Isfahān," in M. Sharif, ed., *A History of Muslim Philosophy* (Kempten (Germany): Allgāuer Heimatverlag GmbH., 1966), vol. 2, p. 926.

[23] See for instance Kāshānī's *al-Haqā`iq (The Realities*), Beirut: Darul-Kutub Al-Arabi, 1979.

[24] There are certain works that deal with the ethical system of Ghazālī. For instance, see Muhammad Abul Quasem, *The Ethics of Al-Ghazālī*, Malaysia, 1975; Mohamed Ahmed Sherif, *Ghazālī's Theory of Virtue*, Albany, 1975; Majid Fakhry, *Ethical Theories in Islam* (Netherlands, 1991), chapter six.

[25] Sa'idī Khurāsānī's introduction to Fayd, *al-Haqā`iq*, p. 6 (header).

[26] As mentioned in his Introduction, Kāshānī has attempted to omit the weak and non-reliable traditions and argumentation from Ghazālī's book. See Kāshānī, *al-Mahajjah al-Baydā' fī Tahdhīb al-Ihyā'* (Qum: Daftar-i Intishārāti Islāmī, 1980), Introduction.

[27] For more detail of his influence on Islamic philosophy see: S. H. Nasr, "The Metaphysics of Sadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī," in *Qajar Iran*, ed. by E. Bosworth (California, 1992), pp. 177-198; F. Rahman, *The philosophy of Mullā Sadrā* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1976), pp. 13-16.

[28] Kāshānī, *Usūl al-Ma`ārif*, pp. 3-5.

[29] For more developmental examination of the issue of being or existence, see Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullā Sadrā* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1976), pp. 27-34; S. H. Nasr, "Mullā Sadrā: his teachings," in Nasr and O.Leaman (eds.), *History of Islamic Philosophy*, vol. 1 (New York, 1996), p. 646-648.

[30] Kāshānī, *Usūl al-Ma`ārif*, pp. 6-9.

[31] Ibid., p. 9. On Ibn `Arabi and Mullā Sadrā's points of view, see S. H. Nasr, "Mullā Sadrā: his teachings," in Nasr, (ed.), *History of Islamic Philosophy*, vol. 1 (New York, 1996), p. 647.

[32] *Ibid*., pp. 45-46.

[33] This latter technical term is used by Fazlur Rahman when he explores the Mullā Sadrā's doctrine of *tashkīk al-wujūd*. See Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullā Sadrā* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1976), pp. 34-37.

[34] Kāshānī, *Usūl al-Ma`ārif*, pp. 11-12.

[35] *Ibid*., pp. 14-17.

[36] In chapter 4, we will discuss more about Kāshānī's examination of *`ishq* and *mahabbah* (love).

[37] Kāshānī, *Usūl al-Ma`ārif*, pp. 14-17. On Mullā Sadrā, Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullā Sadrā* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1976), p. 36.

[38] In several places of his works, Kāshānī has profoundly reflected on the theory of the perfect man, *al-insān al-kāmil*. See, for instance, Kāshānī, *Usūl al-Ma`ārif*, p. 46, *Kalimāti Maknūnah*, 115-125, 149-152, 187-193. Actually the theory itself has received a more precise observation within the realm of mysticism (*`Irfān*). However, Mullā Sadrā and his followers, like Kāshānī, developed the theory in the context of their transcendental philosophy or theosophy (*al-hikmah al-muta`ālīyah*). On Mullā Sadrā's view point, see Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullā Sadrā* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1976), p. 37.

[39] Kāshānī, *Usūl al-Ma`ārif*, pp. 164-167.

[40] *Ibid*., pp. 164-165. See also Kāshānī, *Kalimāti Maknūnah*, pp. 81-83.

[41] *Ibid*., pp. 158-159. In this principle, the credit is for Kāshānī's master, Mullā Sadrā Shīrazī. The English statement of Mullā Sadrā is narrated from Nasr. See S. H. Nasr, "Mullā Sadrā: his teachings," in Nasr and O.Leaman (eds.), *History of Islamic Philosophy*, vol. 1 (New York, 1996), p. 655.

[42] *Ibid*., pp. 145-159. The English statement of Mullā Sadrā is narrated from Fazlur Rahman. See Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullā Sadrā* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1976), p. 199.

[43] In the Islamic tradition, there are several concepts that convey the meaning of "virtue," such as "*fadhīlah*," "*karāmah*," "*Ihsān*," and "*taqwā*." We usually have the problem of finding an appropriate equivalent for a technical concept which is used in different languages. Later on I will precisely talk about the proper meaning of virtue that I am using in this work.

[44] Of course, as Fakhri remarks, the Holy Qurān does not contain any systematic ethical theory in the strict sense, yet it embodies the whole of the Islamic etho. See M. Fakhry, Ethical Theories in Islam (Netherlands, 1991), p. 1.

[45] T. J. De Boer, *The History of Philosophy in Islam*, English trans. by Edward R. Jones (New York: Dover Publication Inc., 1967), p. 40.

[46] See Daniel H. Frank, "Ethics," in S. H. Nasr and O.Leaman (eds.), *History of Islamic Philosophy*, part II (New York, 1996), pp. 959-968.

[47] I disagree with Osman Bakar when he insists on the law as the source of morality and disregards the other sources such as *kalām* (theology), *Tafsīr* (the interpretation of the Holy Qurān), and *hadīth* (Islamic tradition). For more details, see Osman Bakar, "Islam and bioethics," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, vol. 31, no. 1-2 (1986), p. 160.

[48] George F. Hourani, "Ethics in Medieval Islam: A Conspectus," in George F. Hourani (ed.), *Essays on Islamic Philosophy and Science* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1975), p. 129.

[49] Majid Fakhry, *Ethical Theories in Islam* (Netherlands, 1991), pp. 6-7.

[50] See Majid Fakhry, *Ethical Theories in Islam* (Netherlands, 1991).

[51] Introducing Mullā Sadrā's philosophy, Mishkat explains that he (Mullā Sadrā) is a philosopher who opened a new horizon into philosophy and founded a special philosophical school which tends to "*Ishrāq*" and mysticism, flexible and adaptable to the Divine Law, enjoying equally reasons and sermons, narration and taste, mystical and religious issues. Then, Mullā Sadrā implemented the adaptability of his philosophy in a kind of commentary on *The Qur'ān* and interpreted a part of the Chapter of *Baqara* and numerous other chapters and verses. He also expanded it in the shape of *hadīth* (narration) so that he wrote a commentary on *Usūl al-Kāfī* until the end of the chapter of "*al-Hujjah*" (the Reason). Then his student Mullā Muhsin Fayd Kāshānī came and expanded the adaptation to all issues of the Divine Law including *hadīth,* jurisprudence and morals; and put them together in a new way." See Mishkāt's introduction to Kāshānī's *Al-Mahajja,* p. 22. It might be noted that Mullā Sadrā's philosophy is like a cross at which four trends, meaning the Peripatetic school of Aristotle and Ibn Sīnā, the Illuminationistic philosophy of Suhrawardī, the theoretical mysticism of Ibn `Arabī and theological meanings and expressions met and like four streams merged and formed a huge river.

[52] Later, I will explain Ghazālī's moral thinking in more details.

[53] Recently, as Prof. Nasr remarks, "Mullā Sadrā has been introduced to the West and other parts of the non-Islamic world by such scholars as Henry Corbin, Toshihiko Izutsu, S.H.Nasr and Mehdi Mohaghegh, with the result that there is now a great deal of interest in his works in the West as well as in parts of the Islamic world such as the Arab countries, Turkey, Indonesia and Malaysia which did not show much interest in later Islamic philosophers in general and Mullā Sadrā in particular, until recently. Moreover, numerous theses are being written throughout the world on him and his school." See S.H.Nasr and O.Leaman (eds.), *History of Islamic philosophy*, chapter 36.

[54] For the moral principles which are used by Ghazālī, see Muhammad Abul Quasem, *The Ethics of Al-Ghazālī* (Malaysia, 1975), pp. 147-189. There are certain types of virtue classified by Ghazālī under mystical virtues. According to Ghazālī, love, hope, gratitude, for example, are mystical virtues. However, for Ghazālī, knowledge and action play the principle role in the process of any kind of virtue.

[55] For a useful argument in this regard, see Charles E. Butterworth, "Ethics in Medieval Islamic Philosophy," *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, vol. 11, no. 2 (Fall 1983), pp.

[56] Kāshānī, MB, vol. 5, p. 98; HM, pp. 54-55.

[57] The Greek understanding of virtues has been discussed in details in chapter one.

[58] MB, vol. 5, p. 95; HM, pp. 54-56.

[59] *Ibid.*, pp. 95-98.

[60] *Ibid.*, pp. 103-105; HM, pp. 60-63.

[61] You may find Kāshānī's account of the virtue of love of God in several places of his works. For example, see KM, pp. 85-91; *al-Haqā`iq*, pp. 171-188; MB, vol. 8, pp. 3-79.

[62] MB, vol. 5, pp. 96-98, 108-109; HM, pp. 55-58.

[63] *Ibid.*, pp. 99-100.

[64] *Ibid.*, p. 98.

[65] *Ibid.*, vol. 8, p. 8; HM, p. 171.

[66] In Arabic language, nearness is called *qurb*. On Kāshānī's account of the issue of *qurb* (nearness to God) and its role in his morality, see his KM, pp. 89-90.

[67] In his argumentation regarding the three principles, Kāshānī relies on certain Qurānic verses and Prophetic traditions. In his two main works on *Akhlāq* (ethics), *al-Mahajjah* and *al-Haqā`iq,* you can find those narrations.

[68] This is also a Platonic approach to the issue of loving God as the Good. As Simone Weil explains, "Plato expresses as strongly as it is possible to do that for men God is the object to which love directs itself." See Simone Weil, *On Science, Necessity, and the Love of God*, Essays collected, translated, and edited by Richard Rees (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 104. In the following chapters, we will have more reflection on the Platonic account of love of God.

[69] In several places of his works, Kāshānī discusses the issue of nearness to God (*qurb*), gazing on God (*ru`yah* or *mushāhadah*), and human perfection (*kamāli insāni*). For instance, see KM, pp. 2-6, 89-90, 109-114, 154-157; HM, pp. 178-180; MB, vol. 6, pp. 121-124; vol. 8, pp. 27-42

[70] Kāshānī has a very detailed discussion regarding the concept of love, its grades, causes, and production. See MB, vol. 8, pp. 3-101. The meaning of love, as used in Kāshānī's terminology, as well as its usage in his ethical system, will be discussed in the following chapters.

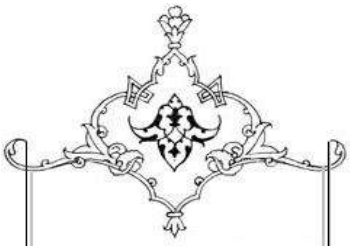
[71] In Chapter 4, I will examine Kāshānī's understanding and argumentation about the role of knowledge and action in the promotion of love of God.

[72] See MB, vol. 7, p. 273; vol. 8, p. 8.

[73] Ibid., vol. 8, pp. 55-63.

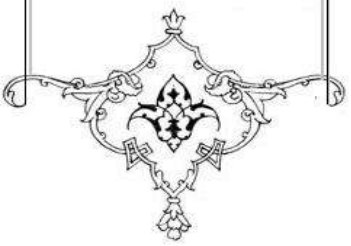
[74] The essence of the concept of annihilation is that at this stage, a lover of God is sometimes so much engrossed in the contemplation of his beloved that he forgets everything except Him; he is not even conscious of himself or his own condition. See Kāshānī, HM, pp. 181-2; see also his KM, pp. 154-157.

[75] See HM, p. 171.



CHAPTER THREE

Malebranche: Life, Works, Thought, and His Moral Theory



CHAPTER 3

Malebranche: Life, Works, Thought, and His Moral Theory

I. Malebranche's Life

As the youngest child to Nicolas Malebranche, secretary to Louis XIII, and Catherine de Lauzon, sister of a viceroy of Canada, Nicholas Malebranche was born in Paris on August 6, 1638. He received his early education from a home instructor, until he was old enough to enter the course of philosophy at the Collège de La Marche.

Malebranche studied philosophy and theology at this college from 1654 to 1656. Then he entered the Sorbonne in Paris and continued his study in theology and philosophy until 1659. At age 22, Nicholas Malebranche joined the Congregation of the Oratory[1] where he spent the rest of his life in seclusion. Malebranche's education here formed the foundations for his later work. In 1664, Malebranche was ordained a priest and, in the same year, he became familiar with Descartes' thought.

An opportune reading of Descartes' Traité de l'homme (Treatise on Man) influenced his future life, and he became an enthusiastic Cartesian. Hence, for ten years (1664-1673) Malebranche devoted his life to studying Descartes, particularly his metaphysics and mathematics.[2] The scholarly productive time of Malebranche's life took place in the years between 1674, the time of his first publication of the *Search After Truth*, and 1712, the time he completed the sixth edition of the Search. In these years, Malebranche was able to develop a unique systematic thought through his writings and teachings,

presenting a synthesis of Christianity and science, religion and intellect, philosophy and theology, modernity and tradition.

Malebranche was deeply influenced by Descartes.[3] About Descartes, he says: "In thirty years (Descartes had) discovered more truths than all the other philosophers put together." He was also influenced by Leibniz, who visited Paris in 1672. The two had many discussions about philosophical and mathematical matters. Leibniz, through these conversations, conveyed many of his ideas about his new calculus to Malebranche.[4]

Beginning in 1674, Malebranche served as professor of mathematics at the Congregation of the Oratory. Through him the work of Leibniz and Descartes in mathematics was spread and developed. Although he made no outstanding mathematical discoveries, he had a large influence on the development of mathematics and science, mainly through the group that he assembled in Paris which was seen as the leading one in France. Mathematicians such as Varignon, de 'Hôpital, Guisnée and Reyneau all became part of this circle at the Oratory.

In 1699 Malebranche was elected to the Académie des Sciences for his scientific writings. Near the end of his life, similarities between his views of God and those of Spinoza led to accusations that he followed Spinoza's heretical system. He defended himself against these charges in various letters and writings. Malebranche was taken ill in 1715 while staying at the house of a friend at Villeneuve, Saint-Georges. He was taken back to the Oratory in Paris and died four months later after great suffering.[5]

II. Malebranche's Works

Malebranche accomplished his first and most important work in the three volumes of *De la recherche de la vérité* (*The Search After Truth*). This work was published in 1674-75 as the result of his several years of studying Augustine and Descartes, as well as sciences and

Mathematics. In this work, Malebranche presents a synthesis of the intellectual systems of Augustine and Descartes, dealing with questions of philosophical theology, metaphysics, epistemology, methodology, physics, and sense physiology. God and His role in every aspect of the world are discussed as one of the main and major parts of his doctrine in this work.

After the publication of his main work, *The Search*, Malebranche received critiques and was forced to respond or explain his doctrines. He published *Traité de la nature et de la grace* (*Treatise of Nature and Grace*) in 1680 not only to respond to critics, but also to clarify his theological doctrine, precisely in the field of nature and grace. In this work, Malebranche attempted to resolve God's power, knowledge, and goodness with the evil in the world. At this point, Malebranche faced more debate and controversy, mainly with French thinkers Jacques Bénigne Bossuet and Antoine Arnauld.[6]

Among several critics of Malebranche's work, French theologian Antoine Arnauld (1612-94), who published his critiques of the *Search* in 1683,[7] was the most insensitive one. To reply to Arnauld's critiques, Malebranche wrote *Reponse du Pere Malebranche au Livre des varies et des fausses idees* in 1684. This was the beginning of a long debate between these two thinkers on both philosophical and theological matters and continued until the end of Arnauld's life.[8]

This debate has been considered as one of the great intellectual events of the seventeenth century that attracted the attention of many philosophers and scientists, including Leibniz, Locke and Newton.[9]

Malebranche's main work on morality, *Traite de morale* (*Treatise on Ethics*), in which he precisely expounds his ethical system based on Christian foundations of morality was published in 1683. This work will be one of the main subjects of this research.

Malebranche's scientific work, the *Traite des lois de la communication du mouvement*, was published in 1682. In this work,

Malebranche develops the nature of light and color, and maintains the infinitesimal calculus and theory of vision. The publication of this mathematical and scientific work led him to be elected to the Académie des Sciences in 1699.

In 1683, it was the publication of the *Meditations Chretiennes et metaphysiques*, in which Malebranche rationalizes and defends his metaphysical system through certain dialogues. Another important work, *Entretiens sur la métaphysique et sur la religion* (*Dialogues on Metaphysics and on Religion*), was published in 1688. This is presented in fourteen dialogues that more informally covers much of the ground in his *Search after Truth*, and A *Treatise on Morality.* Nicholas Jolley considers this work (*Dialogue*…) to be Malebranche's masterpiece. Jolley adds that from a strictly literary point of view it is a far better work than the notoriously rambling *The Search After Truth*.

The *Dialogue*, a work on metaphysics in the broad sense, includes not only ontology but also the theory of knowledge.[10] Furthermore, Jolley claims that in his *Dialogue* more than any other works, Malebranche successfully synthesized the new Cartesian philosophy with the Pauline and Augustinian theology.

Finally, as the result of more than ten years of research and study in theology, philosophy and science, Malebranche presented two more works. He published his *Entretien d`un philosophe chretien avec un philosophe chinois, sur l`existence et la nature de Dieu* in 1708, and his *Reflexions sur la premotion physique* in 1715.[11]

III. Malebranche's Thought

Malebranche's philosophical and intellectual training goes back to his early years when he was in the College de la Marche, where he received an Aristotelian education. However, his theological development took place when he entered the Oratory in 1660. Through

four years in the Oratory, Malebranche intensely studied St. Augustine in several fields such as Biblical studies, ecclesiastical history, and theological discipline. Although the Oratory was basically anti-Cartesian in its perspective, Malebranche became acquainted with the doctrines of Descartes through those professors who maintained this new philosophy.

As I have already mentioned, in 1664, Malebranche read Descartes' work, *Treatise on Man* (*Traité de l'homme*), and this occasion has been considered the pivotal event of his intellectual life. Consequently, Malebranche spent the next ten years to study Cartesian thought, particularly philosophy and Mathematics.

We may perceive the fundamental ground for Malebranche's metaphysical and epistemological system through his first writing.[12] Malebranche, as Jolley indicates, belongs to the Augustinian tradition which shows no inclination to place philosophy and theology in separate compartments. Following Augustine and Anselm, Malebranche believes that philosophy and theology may be serviceable to each other in their common endeavor of seeking truth.[13]

In a synthesis of Augustine's and Descartes' thoughts presented in his main works, *Dialogue* and *The Search After Truth*, Malebranche maintains the role of God in every aspects of the world to the extent that one may say that the concept of divinity forms the key-stone of Malebranche's intellectual system, including metaphysics, epistemology, theology and morality.[14]

In this regard, Jolley believes that Malebranche's whole philosophical system is formed by a profound theological intuition; the intuition expressed by Paul's words in Acts that in God we live, move, and have our being (Acts 17:28). Jolley insists that Malebranche never loses sight of this central intuition which gives the system a profound and satisfying thematic unity.[15] In his introduction to Malebranche's Dialogue, Jolley claims that in no other work does Malebranche succeed as well in synthesizing the new Cartesian philosophy with the

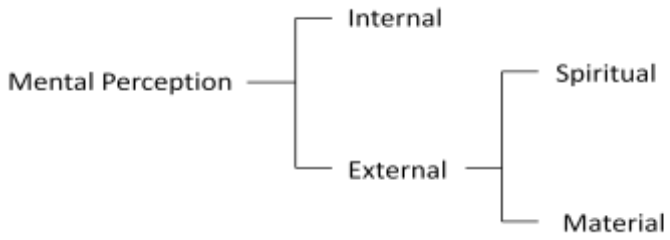
themes of Pauline and Augustinian theology, and this synthesis stands as one of the great achievements of seventeenth-century philosophy.[16]

This Divine-centered consideration results in his two main doctrines, the vision in God and occasionalism.[17] John Cottingham believes that "occasionalism is fueled not just by philosophical argument but by theological motives. The tendency of occasionalism is clearly to push Descartes' metaphysics in a theocentric direction." On the other hand, as Cottingham explains, "this combination of philosophical argument and theological motives is also at work in Malebranche's doctrine of vision in God."[18] These two aspects of Malebranche's philosophy have been especially influential in the history of philosophy, both positively and negatively.[19]

As to the first of these doctrines, Malebranche was concerned with explaining how our minds receive perceptual images of external objects. His final answer to the question is that God contains images of all external things within Himself, and God implants these ideas in our mind at the appropriate times. Thus, we see external objects by viewing their images as they reside in God. To explore and develop this epistemological theory, Malebranche has employed both rational and traditional terminology. As we will see, he is extremely dependent on his theistic confidence and at the same time, he acknowledges the ancient systematic rationality. This basically demonstrates how Malebranche was successful in synthesizing several intellectual and traditional disciplines into a unique system.

In designing his epistemological system which essentially serves as the foundation of any ontological or moral development, Malebranche deals with the critical dilemma of the relationship between idea and the external world. In *The Search after Truth* while addressing the notion of idea,[20] Malebranche argues that we do not have direct access to the external objects but have only ideas or perceptions which presumably resemble those objects. He defines "idea" as "the immediate object" or the nearest thing to the mind when it perceives anything."[21] A central problem in modern philosophy deals

with the connection between our perceptions and the external objects which apparently produce our perceptions. To solve this problem, or more precisely, to escape this dilemma, Malebranche presents a different mechanism to link mental perception and external objects. He divides mental perceptions into the following groups:



Malebranche illustrates that mental perceptions in general are either internally fabricated or externally produced. Our internal mental perceptions, such as our emotions, are not themselves ideas since they do not copy or represent anything, whereas idea-perceptions of external objects in fact represent those objects. Malebranche argues that mental perceptions are given to us as ideas which represent or copy the original object.

Having accepted the fact that the ideas of external things are only representations or copied images of the original object, Malebranche then reflects on the next step which is the question of how we acquire these copied images of the original. Rejecting the other theories and possibilities of how represented ideas are channeled to us, Malebranche argues that we realize ideas of external things by viewing them through God Himself.[22]

His argumentation consists of two parts. On the one hand, God, as Creator, must have the ideas of all things. On the other, all spirits and spiritual things such as ideas dwell within God, just as all physical things dwell in space.[23]

Malebranche highly criticized the scholastics in their following Aristotelianism with respect to the issue of sensation and the process of knowledge.[24] Then he presents several proofs of his theory of realizing ideas of external objects by viewing those ideas in God. He illustrates God's productivity by describing the variety of things which God created out of extension alone, i.e. out of physical substance alone. Given that we obtain ideas of external things by viewing them through God, this does not mean that we actually can see the inner nature of God Himself. God's nature is simple, and the ideas of things we see in God are complex.

At this point, Malebranche turns to his final proof that we see all things in God. He argues that God Himself sees all things in His own perfection, and He is so closely united with the soul by His Presence that He may be said to be the place of spirits, as space is the place of bodies. Therefore, the mind may see in God all the works of God, supposing God is willing to reveal them. Now, Malebranche argues that since God creates all things for his own purpose, then as human creatures we cannot perceive anything without seeing God in those things. This is obviously the case when considering that all of our love (or desire) is directed toward God. However, we see God especially when we consider necessary truths, such as those of mathematics and ethics.

Unlike Augustine who argues that we see God in the ideas behind truths,[25] Malebranche argues that we see God in the truths themselves. In addition to eternal truths, we also know all the facts about the physical world by viewing them in God. Although, when we see all things in God, it is not as if we are sensing them in God. Instead, God actively places these ideas in us by making the appropriate physiological modifications in our souls. Therefore, God is the source of all ideas, including facts about the physical world and moral truths. However, the manner in which God gives us these ideas differs. For example, ideas of necessary truths come from a union or direct cognizance with God himself.

In chapter seven of *The Search after Truth*, he discusses the various ways that we know things. We know God through himself. We know bodies through the ideas which God gives us of them. We know our own souls through consciousness and inner sensation. Finally, we know other people's minds only through conjecture, and/or based on their resemblance to ourselves.

This epistemological approach to the external and the internal world, was extensively considered by modern thinkers and even by the thinkers of his time such as Berkeley and Hume.[26]

Perhaps we can better comprehend Malebranche's understanding of the external world if we reflect upon it within his ontological and metaphysical context. For him, since we live and move and have our being in God, the ideas that we have of the external and internal worlds as well as those of material and spiritual things, are the immediate objects that are impressed on the mind by God whenever He wishes us to know what lies beyond our own minds and their states.

Malebranche's second main doctrine is named the occasionalist theory.[27] Occasionalism is a metaphysical doctrine which states that finite things do not posses any active power and asserts that God is the only cause, whereas physical events and mental states are only occasions for God's action. During the Middle Ages, Muslim theologians in the eight century developed a slight version of occasionalism as an alternative to Aristotelian theories of causality.[28] Occasionalism, however, gained serious attention in the West during the seventeenth century when Arnold Geulincx and Nicolas Malebranche developed theories to resolve the problem of interaction in general, and of the interaction between mind (immaterial) and body (material) in particular, which was posed by the dualism of René Descartes.[29] Accordingly, occasionalism is the view that God is the principal force behind all causal events. In fact, the origination of this position goes to Descartes' theory of causation. For Descartes, God is the cause of all created things as a cause of both being and becoming. He claims:

> The sun is the cause of the light which it emits, and God is the cause of created things, not just in the sense that they are causes of the coming into being of these things, but also in the sense that they are causes of their being; and hence they must always continue to act on the effect in the same way in order to keep it in existence.[30]

In his *Principles on Philosophy*, Descartes defends the view that "God is the Primary Cause of Motion." He says:

> [The cause of motion in nature] is in fact two-fold: first, there is the universal and primary cause the general cause of all the motions in the world. And second, there is the particular cause which produces in an individual piece of matter some motion which it previously lacked. Now as far as the general cause is concerned, it seems clear to me that this is no other than God himself. In the beginning, in his omnipotence he created matter along with its motion and rest. And now, merely by his regular concurrence, he preserves the same amount of motion and rest in the material universe as he put there in the beginning. ... Thus, God imparted various motions to the parts of matter when he first created them, and he now preserves all this matter in the same way, and by the same process by which he originally created it. And it follows from what we have said that this fact alone makes it most reasonable to think that God likewise always preserves the same quantity of motion in matter.[31]

In this argumentation, Descartes clearly expresses that God maintains the existence of things after creation, therefore, it is God who continually grants motion to things. Accordingly, God is the only authentic cause for any kind of motion that occurs in the universe.[32] Influenced by this ontological theory, Malebranche further developed Descartes' reasoning and constructed the explicit defense for

occasionalism. *The Search after Truth* details Malebranche's doctrine.[33]

Refusing the ancient examination of causality, Malebranche develops his understanding of the issue by applying a theological language. He explains that nothing could be assumed as a real cause, because if something has causal power, it is to some degree Divine, and would therefore be superior to us and entitled to be worshipped.

Malebranche states that God is the true cause of all motion. He argues that only physical bodies and spirits exist, and that physical bodies cannot causally move things themselves. Therefore, only spirits can causally move things. He continues, stating that finite minds cannot causally move things, and God, who is infinitely perfect, can causally move things. Therefore, Malebranche concludes only God can causally move things.

Malebranche then states that the natural causes we see around us are the occasional or incidental causes. Just as God is the true cause of all physical motion, He is also the true cause of all mental events which are not physical. Malebranche argues specifically that God is the true cause of human sensation and bodily motion.

Malebranche offers additional arguments showing why God must be the true cause of physical motion, even if our wills are also involved. First, if God would make someone move contrary to his desire, the person's desire would clearly be only the occasional cause, and not the true cause. Second, if God makes a person's will the true cause of an event, then, in the acts of creation and destruction, the person's will would also be the true cause. This is especially absurd when considering non-human decisions in which the wills of animals and even the natural dispositions of matter may be present along with God's will. These, clearly, are not the true causes of the resulting motion, creation or destruction. Third, if God could give such power to people, animals or matter, he would be making them into gods, which God cannot do. For Malebranche, superstitions and Godless beliefs

resulted from the failure to recognize God as the true cause of all. Just as proper religion teaches us that there is only one true God, proper philosophy teaches us that there is only one true cause of everything.

Furthermore, occasionalists hold not only that God brought the universe and all that is in it into being, but also that He sustains them at every moment of their existence.[34] This occasionalist doctrine, however, derives from and depends on a metaphysical observation that God, who is the only creator, creates everything in the world. Regardless of the epistemological and cosmological consequences of his occasionalist theory,[35] this theistic observation about God, the universe and their relationship helps Malebranche fabricate a metaphysical bedrock for his ethical theory as we will see in our following discussion.

I think that we cannot fully appreciate thinkers like Malebranche unless we understand that his views about the extent of God's causal role in nature have emerged from a long tradition in theistic philosophy; a tradition whose Christian spokesmen have always been eager to trace back to St. Augustine, a hero whom they regard as untainted by the corrupting influence of Aristotelian naturalism.[36]

The Aristotelians, such as Aquinas, share with the occasionalists issues like the assertion that God is an immediate cause of every natural effect, and the rejection of the claim that God's causal activity in nature is exhausted by His creating and conserving material substances and their causal powers.[37] But unlike the occasionalists, they claim that each material or corporeal substance possesses and exercises its own proper causal powers. They insist that such powers are not supplanted or rendered vain by God's causal activity in nature. Instead, God contributes to the ordinary course of nature only as a universal or general cause who cooperates with or concurs with secondary causes.

However, as far as I have understood, no well-known occasionalist has denied the existence of free choice or that such free choice involves a genuine active causal power to produce effects.[38] Malebranche, for instance, draws back from the thought that our sinful deeds might be ascribable entirely to God as an active cause.[39] So in all fairness we should define occasionalism in a way that protects it from questions concerning God's causal influence on free choice.[40]

Malebranche sees occasionalism as a theoretically satisfying account of how mind and body are interrelated.[41] Mind and body do not causally interact with one another, but he considers this as a special instance of the more general truth that no creature, be it corporeal or spiritual, causally acts upon any other creature. Instead, God alone coordinates the created effects and guarantees the customary concatenation of mental and bodily events.[42]

Malebranche continues:

> To render God all the respect due Him, it is not enough to adore Him as the sovereign power and to fear Him more than His creatures; we must also fear and adore Him in all His creatures. All our reverence must be directed toward Him, for honor and glory are due only Him. Thus, the philosophy that teaches us that the efficacy of secondary causes is a fiction of the mind, that Aristotle's, and certain other philosophers', *nature* is a chimera, that only God is strong and powerful enough not only to act in our soul but also to give the least motion to matter, this philosophy, I say, agrees perfectly with religion, the end of which is to join us to God in the closest way. We ordinarily love only things capable of doing us some good: this philosophy therefore authorizes only the love of God, and absolutely condemns the love of everything else. We should fear only what can do us some evil: this philosophy therefore sanctions only the fear of God and absolutely condemns all others.[43]

Our brief observation of Malebranche's main doctrines, namely the vision in God and occasionalism, helps us understand the epistemological and ontological foundation on which he has constructed his entire system, including theological and moral disciplines.[44] However, to study Malebranche's morality requires a deep consideration of the God-man and God-world relationship through Malebranche's eyes. As we will see, God performs a very significant role in Malebranche's ethical system to the extent that we may find his morality to be a God centered morality. Hence, scrutinizing his two major doctrines prepared a scholarly foundation for our following discussion.

In a conclusion, we may point out that Malebranche's philosophical thought has been produced by a systematic combination of a rational examination initiated from Greek-oriented thought and advanced through Descartes' rationalism, and a traditional observation originated from religious accomplishments and developed through St. Augustine and Thomas Aquinas.[45] We find this two-fold discipline both in his methodological application and his systematic reflection.[46]

Malebranche compared his intellectual discipline, which he called a new philosophy with Religion (Christianity) and tempered his metaphysical observations with religious facts in which he believed. He states:

> For if Religion teaches us, that there is but one true God, this Philosophy shows us there is but one true Cause. If Religion informs us, that all the Divinities of the Heathens are only Stones and Metals without Life and Motion: This Philosophy discovers to us also, that all second Causes, or all the Divinities of their Philosophy, are only Matter and inefficacious Wills. In short, if Religion teaches us, that we must not bow our Knees to false Gods, this Philosophy also tells us, that our Imaginations and Minds ought not to be prostituted to the Imaginary Greatness and Power of Causes, which are not true Causes: That we must neither

> love nor fear them, nor busie our selves about them; but think upon God only, see him, adore him, fear and love him in all things.[47]

In this very comprehensible excerpt, Malebranche seeks not only to corroborate the main principles of his philosophical discipline, but also to uphold his theological observations derived from his Christian faith. This helps us understand the theological and intellectual context in which Malebranche endeavored to develop and improve his moral system. In the following discussion, as well as the forthcoming chapters, we will have more concerns about this last consideration.

Following Descartes' doctrine, Malebranche accepts dualism; that man's body belongs to the world of things while his soul is one with God.[48] Malebranche assigns to the soul (mind) and the body a specific role with respect to their epistemological and biological functions.[49]

Man's soul differs from his body because it possesses force and freedom. To understand his theory of love, it is essential to keep this dualism clearly in mind; for this dualism allows him to say that the soul's relation to God totally differs from its relationship to the physical and bodily things. Nonetheless, Malebranche signifies the human soul as a simple, indivisible substance without any plurality of parts which develops the function of all spiritual and mental modes such as reflection, feeling and decision; "it is the I that thinks and feels and wills."[50]

Therefore, *will*, as a faculty of the human soul, is a certain natural inclination of the mind.[51] According to Malebranche, the final causes of these natural inclinations, or the final aim of the *will* is the general or universal good. The general good in itself is that which includes all other goods within itself, that is God.[52]

By this psychological element, Malebranche approaches the problem of human freedom.[53] According to Malebranche, freedom

should be understood and identified within his metaphysical theory of causality and God-man relationship. Freedom does not mean that the human soul has the liberty of indifference, the power to will or not to will, or to will contrary to our natural inclinations.[54]

As we have seen before, Malebranche believed that natural inclinations lead us to the universal good, i.e. God. Therefore, man's freedom or exercise of *will* simply affords the occasion for God's effectual activity in the domain of extended things. Malebranche defines the human will as "the capacity which the soul possesses to love different goods."[55] In this process, the soul can apprehend the determination of itself toward any particular good until it has compared a number of competing goods and discovered the one in which the universal good is most completely realized.[56] Therefore, according to Malebranche, will is the Divinely inspired inclination toward the Good. Liberty, hence, is the power by which the soul checks this inclination toward the good in general, and fixes it on a particular object.[57] Hence, Malebranche accepts that the human will is not truly free but rather determined to strive toward God.[58]

Then Malebranche links man's freedom or *will* and the theory of love. He insists that the love of God influences whatever decision the soul may make, even though evil may result.[59] In the following chapters, we will reflect on Malebranche's examination of the theory of love.

To conclude at this point, we may say that with respect to free-will, Malebranche's psychology demonstrates the thesis that the human soul has the capacity for withholding consent to a particular object, so that the intellect may recognize the lower and the higher goods. However, man's decision is itself affected by God's action on the soul. Finally, God's will affects the determination of the soul's achievement of any level of goodness. Malebranche realized that this Divine determination implicated God as the author of sin. He responded to this penetrating objection by stating that sin results from an intermission of activity. Sin and evil are nothing and though God does all, He is not

the author of sin. In another words, Evil and sin appear in the realm of individual existence and God as the universal good oversees the universal operations with goodness, apart from any particular responsibility. Therefore, eventhough evil appears in certain beings, it must be seen as good when it is viewed universally. Malebranche utilizes this account of evil to maintain a sort of optimism in his account of creation. Finite creation as such would be unworthy of God; it is made a worthy object of God's will through the Incarnation. The evil within creation results from particular wills, and actually enhances the real good.

However, when we study Malebranche's account of particular wills within the context of his metaphysics, the objection still remains unanswered. We learn from him that every specific activity and movement, including particular wills, is determined and caused within the Divine realm. He thought us that God is the *only* cause for any specific activity, human or non-human, freely or non-freely, voluntarily or non-voluntarily, to the extent that man's decision has been identified as nothing but a mere preparation for receiving the Divine will. Thus, how can the particular wills be accordingly eliminated from the domain of divinity?

IV. Malebranche's Moral Theory: Virtue Ethics

In the very beginning of his major book on ethics, Malebranche declares that ethics more closely relates to human being than any other sciences. Ethics is not merely a theoretical science which deals with our meditative and intellectual attitude, rather it teaches us our duties, the path we must follow and the way of becoming eternally happy.[60] So ethics as the science of action and choice, deals with practical truth.

However, Malebranche asserts, in spite of all attempts made by humanity through six thousand years, this science remains very imperfect.[61] In his *De la Recherche de la Verite*, Malebranche

maintains that a knowledge of "la morale" could be accomplished and could take those books (his own books on morality) as a starting point.

About the epistemological ground of his moral theory, Malebranche mentions two major challenges. First, the difficulties he finds everywhere regarding the technical terms, such as those of the Scripture and those of the science of ethics, leads him to state that any explanation and clarification must be exempt from equivocation.[62]

Secondly, according to Malebranche, the terms in ethics are "the most obscure and confused; and yet they are regarded as the most clear." For example, he continues, "everyone imagines he understands the significance of the terms 'to love,' 'to fear,' 'to honor,'…'self-love;'" to define these terms well, we must "already clearly understand the principles of this science, and must also be learned in the knowledge of man."[63] It goes without saying that these two epistemological and linguistic considerations are very significant not only for understanding the vocabulary used in his moral theory, but also for the sake of determining the extent of meaning and interpretation of the same terminology employed by each thinker in our comparative study. This is the reason that in this study I would try to have a relevant clarification of the technical words in the very beginning of each chapter.

In his major work on ethics, *De la Recherche de la Verite,* Malebranche deals with both virtue and duties, devoting a part of his book to each. He starkly distinguishes between the two terms, alerting us that the similarity of the terms should not cause us to confuse virtue with duties.[64]

To avoid any confusion, Malebranche explains both and elaborates their relationship, as well as their different types. Like Aristotle, Malebranche considers moral character and moral excellence or virtue as the basic foundation for his moral system. At the same time, he considers the examination of duties as a part of his moral

system, categorizing them into three types: duties to God, to each other, and to ourselves.[65]

Although the term *virtue* plays a unique role in Malebranche's moral system, we have to be careful about the specific meaning he understands from the term. In the eyes of Malebranche, the structure of virtue is based on two main principles of action and free-will or choice. So whatever is necessity or/and not by choice is not a virtue. For instance, the desire to be happy, seeking happiness, hence self-love, could not be considered as virtues or vices.[66]

Like Aristotle and Aquinas, Malebranche considered happiness as an end, but using his own vocabulary and interpretation. First he distinguished between the motives and the ends, stating that the later cause the former. Then he argued that the desire to be happy or self-love, must make us subject ourselves to the Divine unity and love. Regarding God as the end, Malebranche clarified that we have motive and desire for happiness, which leads us to the perfection and final end, i.e. the unity with God.[67] Hence, through Malebranche's eyes, this final end causes happiness.

Finally, he confirms that we cannot find this happiness and perfection outside ourselves; however, we can find them in God. Therefore, we must love God more than ourselves, and render exact obedience to Him.[68] This last statement marks the bedrock for his love-based morality that will be further considered in the following chapters.

There are some concerns regarding Malebranche's understanding of happiness. First Malebranche's definition of happiness refers to an eternal happiness which cannot be found in this world.[69]

Secondly, Malebranche equates happiness with perfection, one can achieve only through the love of God. Although we have desire or motive for happiness and perfection, or using Malebranche's language, even if we have natural love towards the happiness and perfection of

our own being, this motive and love must be considered the means which leads us towards the Order and Divine love that exists within us. It is not surprising to hear this statement from Malebranche. He is actually relying on his ontological and epistemological ground. As we have seen before, he sees everything in God and through God. God is the only perfect being, and to achieve perfection, one has to come closer to Him, love Him and finally unite with Him.

Given his account of the spiritual journey in the attainment of perfection and unification with God, Malebranche has not eliminated the role of reason and intellectual order. According to Malebranche, in the process of achieving happiness, reason is our law and at the same time it is the model of our perfection. To introduce reason, Malebranche demonstrates that "the Reason which enlightens man is the Word or the Wisdom of God Himself. Though every creature is a particular being, the reason which enlightens man's mind is universal."

Then Malebranche explains the role of reason in the God-man relationship and says, "thus by means of Reason I have, or I am able to have, some intercourse with God."[70] The Reason of which Malebranche speaks is "infallible, immutable," and "incorruptable." He says that reason "must always be our teacher; God Himself followes it."[71]

Malebranche even goes further than this and believes that Reason, with capital R, serves as a mediator in the course of our unification with God.[72] Nevertheless, Malebranche argues the limitations of human reason that necessitate the supplementation of our imperfect knowledge of God with revelation.[73]

Here, Malebranche has employed the same terminology and argumentation for the processes of virtue and that knowledge, which leads us to believe that Malebranche's moral theory which is based on virtue, is grounded on and derived from his metaphysical and epistemological system. One can reasonably declare that Malebranche has formulated his moral system upon his philosophical and

metaphysical framework. One cannot easily assert that his moral theory is purely a virtue-based moral theory. Rather, both virtue and duty play a role in his moral discipline.

As Walton states, "he coordinates one's virtue or development of moral character with one's obligations without sacrificing or debasing either."[74] However, it seems obvious that we may not neglect the unique and significant role of virtue in Malebranche's virtue-based morality.[75]

Methodologically speaking, as we have seen in this chapter, Malebranche has employed some theological elements to construct his moral theory. Other Christian thinkers before him have also synthesized a rational and religious foundation for the moral system. In this regard, he is assumed to be, more or less, a follower of his predecessors like St. Augustine and St. Thomas.[76]

He has developed and reinforced the fact that the virtue-based moral system should rely on and originate from a Divine source. In addition, he stated that the end and goal of the morality and moral behaviors should be the Divine domain which would be fulfilled through the unification with God. It seems apparent that the historical progress of Western thought has influenced the philosophical and theological fundamentals of the theory of moral virtue; and that this theory cannot be rationalized or evaluated apart from historical developments, especially those which occurred during the period of Greek philosophy up to modern time.

As a result of this study, I think that the development of the virtue-based moral theory seems to be more rational in the very beginning, and became more religious and theological later on. It was the same theory that formed within the framework of rational philosophy, and developed and received an extensive progress within a theological context during the period of Greek time to the Middle Ages until seventeenth century.

Now, when we consider Malebranche's moral system as a virtue-based morality which has derived from and relied on a religious bases, we perceive the very close relationship between religion and morality, and/or the Divine order and human behavior. It is out of the scope of this paper to elaborate this relationship and examine the real understanding of it.[77] However, in the following chapters, we will see how Malebranche benefits from the advantages of this relationship in his understanding and interpreting his love-based morality.

This brings me to a brief summary. Concerning the variety of meanings and semantic changes which occurred to the notion of 'virtue' in its historical progress from the Greek time to the end of Middle Ages, one may briefly conclude that the meaning of virtue begins with 'knowledge' as determined by Socrates, and ends with 'love' sustained by Malebranche. Hence, virtue engages the heart as well as the reason. What we understand from this statement is that the theory of virtue in its historical development has journeyed between knowledge and love. Furthermore, it seems that the notion of virtue, as well as the virtue-based moral theory, owes to both philosophy and theology. We may claim now and maintain later, that in the realm of philosophy, virtue means knowledge; and in the domain of theology, it means love.

Malebranche's Time Line
1638-1715

1638 August 6, born in Paris to Nicolas Malebranche, secretary to Louis XIII, and Catherine de Lauzon, sister of a viceroy of Canada.
1660 Having studied theology at the Sorbonne, joins the congregation of the Oratory.
1664 Ordained. Reads Descartes' *Treatise on Man* and spends the next ten years studying Descartes.
1674 Publishes the results of his research on Descartes, De la recherche de la vertie ou l'on traitde la nature, de l'esprit de l'homme et de l'usage qu'il doit faire pour eviter l'erreur dans la science.
1677 Writes *Conversations metaphysiques et chretiennes*.
1680 Writes *Treatise of Nature and Grace*
1683 Writes his *Treatise on Morality.*
1683 Begins his dispute with Arnauld.
1688 Writes *Dialogues on Metaphysics and on Religion*.
1690 *Treatise of Nature and Grace* placed on the Index.
1697 Writes *Treatise on the Love of God*.
1699 Admitted an honorary member of the Academy of Sciences.
1709 *Recherche* placed on the Index.
1715 Dies on October 13.

Notes:

[1] The Congregation of the Oratory was founded in 1575 by Philip Neri. It was a religious order to emphasize the love of God, simple piety, and the celebration of God's creation through study and teaching. It consisted of independent communities of Catholic priests living in obedience to a rule but without vows. The members seek their own sanctification by following the evangelical counsels,

community life, prayer, and the priestly ministry. For more details, see *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, V. 10, pp. 713-4.

[2] See Desmond Connel, *The Vision in God: Malebranche's Scholastic Sources* (Paris: Beatrice-Nauwelaerts, 1967), pp. 7-9.

[3] In the following pages, I will basically consider the deep influence of Descartes on Malebranche's intellectual system.

[4] On Malebranche's conversation with Leibniz, see Walton's Introduction to Malebranche's *Treatise on Ethics*, trans. with Introduction by Craig Walton (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1993), p. 29.

[5] On Malebranche's life and his academic accomplishment, see Riley's Introduction to Malebranche's *Treatise on Nature and Grace*, trans. by Patrick Riley (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), xi-xiii. See also Ralph Withington Church, *A Study in the Philosophy of Malebranche* (New York: Kennikat Press, 1970), pp. 13-18.

[6] Antoine Arnauld was the first to attack Malebranche's system, and he was supported by Bossuet who styled the system *"pulchra, nova, falsa."* In his Introduction to Malebranche's *Treatise on Nature and Grace*, Patrick Riley has thoroughly discussed the debates between Malebranche and his contemporary critic, Arnauld. See Malebranche, *Treatise on Nature and Grace*, trans. by Patrick Riley (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 1-103.

[7] Arnauld's *Des varies et des fausses idees* was published in 1683.

[8] For Arnauld's points of view and criticisms, see his *On True and False Ideas*, trans. by Stephen Gaukroger, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990. See also Monte Cook, "Malebranche versus Arnauld," *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, vol. 24, issue 4 (Oct. 1991), pp. 183-199

[9] See S. Nadler, *The Cambridge Companion to Malebranche*, 6.

[10] See Jolley's introduction to *Dialogue on Metaphysics and on Religion*, English trans. by David Scott, edited by Nicholas Jolley, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

[11] See S. Nadler, *The Cambridge Companion to Malebranche*, pp. 6-7.

[12] See Nicolas Malebranche, *Dialogues on Metaphysics and on Religion*, translated by Morris Ginsberg (London, 1923), pp. 86-98; Malebranche, *Treatise on Ethics*, translated by Walton (Boston, 1993), pp. 45-51.

[13] See Jolley's introduction to *Dialogue on Metaphysics and on Religion*, English trans. by David Scott, edited by Nicholas Jolley, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

[14] For more reflection on Augustinian-Cartesian thought as an intellectual background for the fabrication of Malebranche's scholarly system, see Stephen Menn, *Descartes and Augustine*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. See also Jolley's introduction to *Dialogue on Metaphysics and on Religion*,

English trans. by David Scott, edited by Nicholas Jolley, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

[15] See Jolley's introduction to *Dialogue on Metaphysics and on Religion*, English trans. by David Scott, edited by Nicholas Jolley, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

[16] *Ibid*.

[17] Besides his main work, *The Search After Truth*, Malebranche has explained his theory of knowledge and Occasionalism in several works. For his theory of knowledge, see Nicolas Malebranche, *Dialogues on Metaphysics and on Religion*, translated by Morris Ginsberg (London, 1923), pp. 86-98; Malebranche, *Treatise on Ethics*, translated by Walton (Boston, 1993), pp. 45-51. See also Daisie Rander, *Malebranche: A Study of a Cartesian System* (Netherlands, 1978), pp. 47-59; Ralph Withington Church, *A Study in the Philosophy of Malebranche* (New York: Kennikat Press, 1970), pp. 116-142; Desmond Connel, *The Vision in God: Malebranche's Scholastic Sources* (Paris: Beatrice-Nauwelaerts, 1967), pp. 49-57; Steven Nadler, *Malebranche and Ideas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 5-7, 98-151. For his theory of Occasionalism, see Nicolas Malebranche, *Dialogues on Metaphysics and on Religion*, translated by Morris Ginsberg (London, 1923), pp. 51-60. See also B. Rome, *The Philosophy of Malebranche* (Chicago, 1963), pp. 162-190; Ralph Withington Church, *A Study in the Philosophy of Malebranche* (New York: Kennikat Press, 1970), pp. 73-115; Daisie Rander, *Malebranche: A Study of a Cartesian System* (Netherlands, 1978), pp. 15-23; Steven Nadler, *Malebranche and Ideas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 3-5.

[18] See John Cottingham, *The Cambridge Companion to Descartes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 405.

[19] On the influences of Malebranche's doctrine, see Charles J. McCracken, *Malebranche and British Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), particularly pp. 1-20 and part II.

[20] See ST, Book 3, part. 2, chapters 1-6 (III/2/I-VI), pp. 217-235.

[21] *Ibid*., pp. 217-219.

[22] See ST, III/2/VI, pp. 230-235. In this chapter, Malebranche has a full argumentation about the process of how we see all things in God.

[23] For Malebranche's full argumentation in this regard, see Nicolas Malebranche, *Dialogues on Metaphysics and on Religion*, translated by Morris Ginsberg (London, 1923), pp. 86-98; B. Rome, *The Philosophy of Malebranche* (Chicago, 1963), pp. 120-151.

[24] See Desmond Connel, *The Vision in God: Malebranche's Scholastic Sources* (Paris: Beatrice-Nauwelaerts, 1967), pp. 11-22.

[25] For Augustine's view on God, see Bruno Switalski, *Neo Platonism and the Ethics of St. Augustine* (New York: Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences in America, 1946), pp. 40-62.

[26] For example, during the modern period of philosophy, Malebranche's theory was examined by both Berkeley and Hume. Berkeley encountered arguments in Malebranche, which play a prominent role in his doctrine of immaterialism. And forty years later, David Hume also found many doctrines in Malebranche which were to play an important role in his philosophy. For more details in this regard, see Charles J. McCracken, *Malebranche and British Philosophy* (Oxford, 1983), pp. 119-290.

[27] For a good account of occasionalism, see McCracken, *Malebranche and British Philosophy*, ch. 3.

[28] On the Muslim perspectives regarding occasionalism, see Majid Fakhri, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, 2 vols., New York: Columbia University Press, 1970.

[29] Malebranche is well-known for the theory of "Occasionalism." Beatrice Rome has thoroughly examined this theory. See B. Rome, *The Philosophy of Malebranche* (Chicago, 1963), pp. 162-190.

[30] Descartes, The Philosophical Writings of Descartes, trans. by J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, and D. Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), v. II, p. 254-255.

[31] Descartes, *Principles on Philosophy*, Part II, art. 36. See also Descartes, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, trans. by J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, and D. Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), v. I, pp. 240-243.

[32] On Descartes' theory of the God's only causality of motion, see Stephen Menn, *Descartes and Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 380-392.

[33] See Malebranche, *The Search after Truth*, particularly Book 6, part 2, chapters 2-4, pp. 440-466. See also Nicolas Malebranche, *Dialogues on Metaphysics and on Religion*, translated by Morris Ginsberg (London, 1923), pp. 51-60; B. Rome, *The Philosophy of Malebranche* (Chicago, 1963), pp. 162-190.

[34] See, for example, Nicholas Malebranche, *Dialogue on Metaphysics*, English trans. By Willis Doney (New York: Abaris Books, 1980), p. 153. For more discussion on the notion of continuous creation, see Philip Quinn, "Divine Conservation, Continuous Creation, and Human Action," in *The Existence and Nature of God*, ed. Alferd J. Freddoso (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), pp. 55-80.

[35] It is out of the scope of this research to deal with the challenges taken into account by his critics such as whether occasionalism contradicts the theory of causality. Some may not see any conflict between the two metaphysical theories. For example, there is an effort to maintain a defense of the view that an analysis of

causation in terms of conditionals is compatible with occasionalism. See Philip Quinn, "Divine Conservation, Secondary Causes, and Occasionalism," in *Divine and Human Action: Essays in the Metaphysics of Theism*, ed. Thomas V. Morris (Ithaca, New York: Cornel University Press, 1988), pp. 50-73.

[36] To see how occasionalism could be understood in an Aristotelian context of secondary causation, see Alferd J. Freddoso, "Medieval Aristotelianism and the Case against Secondary Causation in Nature," in Thomas V. Morris, ed., *Divine and Human Action: Essays in the Metaphysics of Theism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), pp. 74-118.

[37] Discussions of God's general or universal causation can be found in St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles* III, chaps. 66-70.

[38] Choice or free choice in a biological context has been identified as the capacity to select from a set of possible actions those that are likely to achieve some end, given the circumstances. See R. L. Gregory, *The Oxford Companion to the Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 147.

[39] See Nicolas Malebranche, *Elucidations of the Search After Truth*, trans. Thomas M. Lennon and Paul J. Olscamp, (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1980), p. 669.

[40] On Malebranche's account of human will and freedom, see Ralph Withington Church, *A Study in the Philosophy of Malebranche* (New York: Kennikat Press, 1970), pp. 239-258; Daisie Rander, *Malebranche: A Study of a Cartesian System* (Netherlands, 1978), pp. 119-132; Tad M. Schmalts, *Malebranche's Theory of the Soul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 192-217.

[41] Malebranche, ES, p. 679.

[42] Malebranche, ST, pp. 448-450; and ES, pp. 669-671.

[43] Malebranche, ES, p. 681.

[44] For a specific concern regarding Malebranche's ontology, see Connel, Desmond, *The Vision in God: Malebranche's Scholastic Sources* (Paris: Beatrice-Nauwelaerts, 1967), pp. 31-35.

[45] Desmond Connel has an informative discussion on the Thomistic origin of Malebranche's ontologism. See Desmond Connel, "The Thomistic origin of Malebranche's ontologism," in V. Chappell, ed., *Early Modern Philosophers*, vol. II (New York, 1992), pp. 1-13.

[46] S. Nadler stated that Malebranche's intellectual system is a combination of his metaphysics, epistemology, philosophical theology, moral philosophy, and sciences. This philosophy thus became one of the most creative and unique philosophical systems of the early modern period. See S. Nadler, *The Cambridge Companion to Malebranche*, p. 2.

[47] Malebranche, ST, III/2/VI, pp. 230-235.

[48] In this regard, Schmalts' essay would be helpful. See Tad M. Schmalts, "Malebranche on Descartes on Mind-Body Distinctness," *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, vol. 32, issue 4 (Oct. 1994), pp. 573-600.

[49] On Malebranche's account of dualism, see Daisie Rander, *Malebranche: A Study of a Cartesian System* (Netherlands, 1978), pp. 5-14; Desmond Connel, *The Vision in God: Malebranche's Scholastic Sources* (Paris: Beatrice-Nauwelaerts, 1967), pp. 35-41; Tad M. Schmalts, *Malebranche's Theory of the Soul*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.

[50] Malebranche, ST, p. 2.

[51] *Ibid.*, p. 7.

[52] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

[53] Schmaltz has scholarly elaborated the problem of human freedom in certain perspectives, including Malebranchian feature. See Schmalts, Tad M., *Malebranche's Theory of the Soul*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 192-217.

[54] ST, p. 9.

[55] See Ralph Withington Church, *A Study in the Philosophy of Malebranche* (New York: Kennikat Press, 1970), p. 240. Church is quoting this phrase from Malebranche's *Recherche*, vol. I, ch. I, p. 25.

[56] ST, pp. 9-10.

[57] See Ralph Withington Church, *A Study in the Philosophy of Malebranche* (New York: Kennikat Press, 1970), p. 240.

[58] *Ibid*.

[59] *Ibid.*

[60] ST, IV/2/III, p. 270.

[61] *Ibid*.

[62] Malebranche, TE, I/3/I, p. 60.

[63] *Ibid.*, I/2/III, p. 54.

[64] TE, I, 2, p. 55.

[65] TE, part I, On Virtue (pp. 45-139), part II, On Duties (pp. 143-222).

[66] TE, II, 14, p. 220.

[67] TE, I, 8, p. 104.

[68] TE, I, 8, pp. 103-105.

[69] Malebranche mentions in several places that a virtuous man desires the eternal happiness and not temporary pleasure. For example, see TE, I, 8, p. 104, and II, 14, p. 220. In chapter five, we will discuss happiness and pleasure through Malebranche's eyes.

[70] TE, I, 1, p. 45.

[71] TE, I, 2, p. 56-57.

[72] TE, II, 14, p. 221.

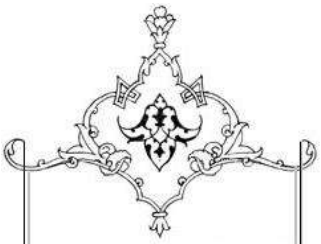
[73] ST, p. 411.

[74] See Walton's Introduction to Malebranche's *Treatise on Ethics*, trans. with Introduction by Craig Walton (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1993), p. 36.

[75] In his introduction to Malebranche's *Treatise on Ethics*, Walton provides an overview of the author's explanation and usage of the term virtue in his moral system. See C. Walton, "Introduction," in N. Malebranche, *Treatise on Ethics*, translated by Walton (Boston, 1993), pp. 8-17.

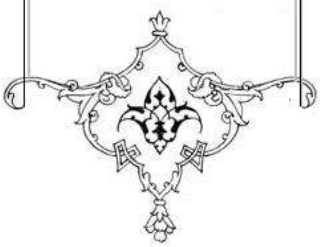
[76] In this regard, See Desmond Connel, "The Thomistic origin of Malebranche's ontologism," in V. Chappell, ed., *Early Modern Philosophers*, vol. II (New York, 1992), pp. 1-13.

[77] For more details, see Stanley Hauerwas, "The self as story: religion and morality from the agent's perspective," *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1973), pp. 73-85. In this essay, Stanley Hauerwas approach the issue of the relationship between religion and morality. He argues that "a right understanding of the relationship of thought and action is essential if we are correctly to understand the relationship of religion and morality."



CHAPTER FOUR

Kāshānī and The Virtue of 'Love of God'



CHAPTER 4

Kāshānī and The Virtue of 'Love of God'

'Love of God' or 'loving God' is a phrase containing the concepts of 'love' and 'God,' and demands features of God, man, and the mediator, namely love. The experience of loving may be initiated from the Divine side and the human side. Both experiences have been discussed and approached through a variety of sciences and rational systems of thought such as philosophy, theology, psychology and mysticism.

Here, I don't want to explore the issue in the diversity of the contextual as well as the methodological disciplines. Nor do I want to approach the Divine side of the issue, i.e. God's love of man, not because Divine love is beyond description, but rather because of the limited scope of this research. The extent of this research induced me to confine my scrutiny, and contemplate the issue of love of God in the context of Kāshānī's moral system.

In this chapter, first I will semantically and historically examine the key concepts of love and God, paying closer attention to Kāshānī's understanding of the concepts. Then, I will briefly survey how the virtue of love of God developed in the history of Islamic morality. Finally, I will critically scrutinize Kāshānī's understanding and interpretation of the virtue of love of God within his moral discipline.

I. Terminology of 'Love' and 'God'

When we come to the realm of definition and determination of love, we face a vast diversity of semantic clarification of the concept

and its equivalents in another language, as well as the number of differing approaches to the problem of distinguishing and classifying the kind of love. In one case, as Norment Bell mentions, there has been an effort "to establish definitions for fifty-one words used to describe love and its many aspects."[1] However, this statement demonstrates that there are certain Arabic words which are employed to convey different aspects or kinds of love. In the following discussion, we will approach some challenges in this regard.

It seems that the terminological counterpart of the concepts of *love* and *God* would become one of the most critical segment of our research when they are combined as a single concept of the '*love of God,'* and representing one simple meaning. This difficulty doubles when the transformation to different languages takes place. In Arabic and Persian for example, there are several terms which correspond to the meaning of 'love of God.' *Mahabbah*, *`ishq*, *mawaddah*, *shawq*, *`uns*, and *ridā* are the mystical and theological terms used to express the concept which is translated as 'love of God.' Later, we will encounter some of Kāshānī's analytical examinations which help us figure out the real meaning of these technical non-English terms.

One of the most critical parts of our examination here is, to my understanding, the linguistic and terminological features of the concept as well as the meaning of 'love.' The reason seems very obvious to me. This concept is one of the rare concepts that are not restricted in their meaning and their application to one or two aspects of humanity, universe and Being. It would not be an exaggeration to declare that 'love' dominates all human features and perspectives, from social attitudes to psychological phenomena, philosophical reflections to mystical intuitions, theological observations to moral deliberations, and textual applications to aesthetic implications. In each categorical discipline, it requires a certain vocabulary and a restricted expressive application to determine its specific terminological reconciliation and semantic adjustment. This variety of approach, which is grounded on a variety of contexts, requires certain definition and determination for

the concept of love.[2] Hence, in this research, I will focus on the philosophical and theological aspects to avoid any ambiguity in definition.[3]

Accordingly, I would argue that the meaning of love is expressed in different types of language. Textual language utilized by religious books such as the Qurān's Verses and Bible's Song of Songs, offers a wide range of love. Theological language reveals the connection of all love to God. Ascetic language warns us of the risk and venture of sin in our failure to love well. Philosophical language challenges us to think clearly about love and to argue reasonably for its place in the wider structure of existence.

The language of poetry and literature is often the most authoritative and powerful way to talk about love. Scientific language, such as that of sociology and psychology, offers a window onto love that is more precise and measurable; an important counterpart to the more pragmatic language usually associated with love. The difficulty here is that our understanding of its meaning (s) may not be complete and/or accurate if we dismiss one or the other of these linguistic avenues and do not speak of love in all its diverse features.

Nevertheless, the scope of our research does not permit us to explore all aspects of the concept of 'love' or the 'love of God.' This scholarly inquiry is a comparative approach to the moral perspective of the notion of 'love of God,' which has been the subject of numerous philosophical debates and theological considerations that are beyond the scope of this research. The only challenge that correlates with our current consideration involves the discussion of the meaning and place of 'love of God' as a virtue within a virtue based moral discipline. The rest of this chapter and the forthcoming chapters will explore our two thinkers' approaches to this issue. The inquiry into the historical context in which their intellectual and revelatory orientations have formed provides a substructure for better understanding them.

a. The Concept of Love

Kāshānī defines love (*mahabbah*)[4] as an inclination to that which is pleasant. He says:

> Love refers to the inclination of nature (*may at-tab`*) to something that is pleasure-giving. If this inclination is very strong; it is called passionate love (*`ishq*).[5]

According to this statement, pleasure is a part of the definition of love. In this regard he says; if a thing is agreeable to a man's nature it gives him pleasure, but if it is disagreeable it gives him pain. Everything that gives man pleasure is beloved by him, and its being loved means that his nature is inclined to it. Likewise, a thing that gives him pain is hated by him and its being hated means that his nature is disinclined to it.

Therefore, love refers to the inclination of nature to something that is pleasure-giving. The more improving and closer inclination one feels, the more effective love he experiences. Kāshānī adds that if this inclination is intense it is called passionate love (*`ishq*).[6] We obtained that Kāshānī interchangeably used the Arabic terms, *mahabbah* and *`ishq* which correspond the English term, love.

For Kāshānī, knowledge (*ma`rifah*) plays a significant role in the process of love or hate. Inclination to or aversion to a thing comes after it is known. This is apparent in the case of the five senses, each of which may be said to love that which gives it delight. By nature, each sense has its own way of apprehending beauty and experiencing love.[7] We share this is a kind of love with the animals.

However, implanted in the heart there exists another sense or faculty of recognition through which we become aware of spiritual beauty and excellence.[8] According to Kāshānī, this sense surpasses the other five senses in apprehension, as the beauty of the abstract meaning it apprehends surpasses the physical beauty seen by them.

Let us view certain definitions from different horizons. In a more mystical approach, Junayd Baghdadi, a well known Sufi, defines love as the substitution of the qualities of the Beloved for the qualities of the lover. In other words, love signifies the passing-away of the individual self; it is an uncontrollable rapture and a God-sent grace which must be sought by ardent prayer and aspiration.[9]

Yet, in another mystical definition of love, we read that the essence of *mahabbah* (love) is a spiritual attachment (*ta`alluq nafsānī*) and a *corporal* inclination to an object which suits the nature of the lover; resulting from his apprehending it with his sight or his insight. Love then is the very attachment and inclination to the beloved.[10]

These are the two very principles that are obviously emphatic in these mystical definitions for love, and may be found in Kāshānī's definition; namely the principle of insight (*basīrah* or *ma`rifah*) and the principle of a specific relationship between lover and beloved brought about by love itself. For Kāshānī this spiritual relationship between lover and the beloved can be fulfilled in man's heart and achieved by the insight which is coming through a special faculty, which he calls the sixth sense. [11]

Muslim thinkers have offered several types of classifications regarding the typology of love. These classifications have been drawn from the context in which 'love' was approached. In one classification two different kinds of affinities cause two different kinds of love. The first is accidental love (*mahabbah `aradīyah*), the second is spiritual love (*mahabbah ruhānīyah*). The former ends when the object ceases to be useful, while the latter is based on the conformity between two souls. In the Aristotelian category, the former corresponds roughly to loves of pleasure and utility.[12]

In another classification, the diversity of ends leads to different types of love. In this case, the ends of different types of men with respect to the things they seek diverge at the level of simplicity into three branches: Pleasure (*ladhdhat*), Profit (*manfa`at*), and Good

(*khair*). Then these three branches combine to form a fourth branch.[13] So, each of these four types of ends require four kinds of love. To adjust this category with the previous one, it is said that love for the sake of pleasure corresponds to (1); love for the sake of profit corresponds to (2); love for the sake of good corresponds to (3); and love for the sake of a combination of the three corresponds to (4).[14]

A third classification, propounded by mystical tradition, differs totally with the above-mentioned classes. The three kinds of love in this category are natural love, spiritual love and Divine love. Based on this classification, the first two are species of the third.[15]

Ibn `Arabī elaborates these three kinds of love within a mystical context by defining them in a hierarchic manner. By Divine love he means the essential love of the One; the eternal love from which spring all other kinds of love.[16] By spiritual love he means the mystical love, which ultimately aims to realize the essential unity of the lover with the Beloved.[17]

The object of natural love is self-satisfaction, regardless of the object loved. Under this love, Ibn `Arabī includes the love he calls elemental love (*al-hubb al-`unsurī*), under which all physical, physiological, and even mechanical attractions are classified.[18] It seems that Ibn `Arabī classifies love into three different but fairly related kinds based on the object of love, which either Divine, the human soul or nature in its broad meaning.

On the other hand, in a mystical approach to the nature of love, there are acclaimed stages for love which have been specified by technical Arabic terms. Out of several lists and categories,[19] I have selected the following, which is more similar to what we understand from Kāshānī and Ghazālī. The mystical list of stages of love is as follows:

1. *ulfa*, stringing together of similars

2. *uns* (intimate association), prolonged gazing at the beloved
3. *wudd*, *mawadda*, *muwasala* [affection]
4. *mahabbah*, increases from *majāzīya* (metaphorical) to *haqīqīya* (real)
5. *khullah* [bosom friendship] increases from *khulla* (friendship) to *khalla* (mystical poverty)
6. *sha`af*, ardent passion for mentioning the beloved
7. *shaghaf* [love which has reached the pericardium]
8. *istihtar* (reckless infatuation)
9. *walah* [derangement, loss of discernment]
10. *hayaman* (bewilderment), loss of solace, patience, and any advantage other than the beloved
11. `*ishq*, final stage (highest stage of love proper)[20]

When we compare this list of mystical stages of love with what Ghazālī and somehow Kāshānī elaborated, we perceive some similarities as well as differences, particularly in their use of the technical terms. In Ghazālī's approach to the stages of love, we see the following list:

1. *mu`anasat al-tabi`a* (communion of nature)
2. *mayl* [inclination]
3. *mawadda* [friendship]
4. *mahabba* [love]
5. *ishtīyāq* (longing)
6. *walah* [derangement, loss of discernment]
7. `*ishq* [highest stage of love proper][21]

As we compare these two lists, we recognize that some stages, or some technical terms of love are missing in Ghazālī's approach and others have been replaced or displaced. However, Ghazālī like many mystics have obviously accredited *`ishq* as the highest stage of love. We may find this mystical observation in Kāshānī's theory as well,[22] since Kāshānī refers to the highest level and the strongest kind of love as *`ishq*.

Kāshānī classified love (*mahabbah*) into several dimensions.[23] In one case, he categorizes love into five types: (1) The first is self-love; every living being loves itself first. Self-love means that every living being has a natural desire to persevere in its existence and avoid death. This love naturally extends to the perfection of an individual's existence and everything that helps to preserve that perfection.[24] Thus, each man first loves himself; then the soundness of his family members and his property, children, kinsfolk and friends.

(2) The second category of love is benefit (*al-ihsān*). Man loves those who benefit him. This second object of love concerns only the means to one's own existence. Naturally, once this love reaches its aim, the means lose their value.[25]

(3) Man may love something other than himself for its own sake ant not for any benefit he may receive from it. This love alone causes him happiness. It is a true and perfect love, inasmuch as its object is beyond a man's own existence. For example, man loves beauty in this way; for the perception of beauty is a delight, loved for its own sake and not for the satisfaction of physical desires. Kāshānī gives the examples of Verdant plants and running water which are loved for themselves apart from their usefulness to man's survival.[26]

(4) Man loves beauty in general. The term beauty (*husn* or *jamāl*) can be applied both to things which cannot be perceived by the senses as well as to well-proportioned shapes and agreeable colors. Beauty in anything means that there exists in it the perfection that befits it. Therefore, when we speak of the beautiful character of a man,

for instance, we refer to the good qualities which are not perceived by the senses but by the inner sight (*al-basīrah al-bātinah*). Thus, the one who loves the saint or the prophet, loves him because of the beauty of his character (*husni khulqihī*).[27] It seems that the difference between this type of love and the previous one is the fact that the object of this love is spiritual beauty and perfection, while the object of the former love is a visional and tangible beauty and excellence.

(5) The fifth category of love is the mysterious, hidden relationship (*al-munāsabah al-khafīyyah*) between two persons which exists not because of beauty or any advantage, but merely as a result of a certain spiritual affinity between them.[28]

After his exploring all these five categories for love, Kāshānī demonstrates that only in God exist all five qualities in their perfect united form. Kāshānī's argumentation about and explanation of love of God will be more precisely examined in our forthcoming discussion.

Before closing this section, i.e. definition and division of love, I would like to briefly highlight the place of love in Kāshānī's cosmology. With respect to the position of love in the process of creation, Kāshānī, in his approach to the nature of love, designates a very extreme position for love in his cosmological system. Influenced by mystical doctrine, Kāshānī maintains that love causes the ordering of all existing things so that no existent thing may be devoid of some love, just as it may not be devoid of some measure of existence (*wujūd*).[29]

Regarding the causality of love for the ordering of all existents, he has actually relied on a very famous *hadīth Qudsī*,[30] in which God says:

كُنتُ كَنزا مَخفِيا فَاحبَبتُ اَن اُعرَف فَخَلقتُ الخَلقَ لكَی اُعرَف

"I was a hidden treasure, then I loved to be known, so I created the world to be known (for them)"[31]

This kind of love is classified under the Divine love which is determined as the root and source of all kinds of love.[32] As we have seen before, this view, which holds that the Divine love is the source of all other kinds, is originally derived from mystical observation.

However, Ghazālī argues that God's love toward man is metaphorical because it does not satisfy the definition of love since it is not an inclination. Hence, according to Ghazālī, man's love to God is real because it is an inclination.[33] Nevertheless, God's love toward man, mystically called as descending love, exceeds our exploration of man's love of God or ascending love. So I leave it to another scholarly opportunity.

b. The Notion of God

Now we approach the second key concept, i.e. the concept of God, in Kāshānī's point of view. In this regard, we may seek Kāshānī's thought and doctrine within a tremendous variety of his writings, which include theological, philosophical, mystical, traditional, and Qurānic contributions. However, I have restricted my scrutiny to Kāshānī's mystical and philosophical approaches to the issue. In philosophy or *hikmah*, if we are to use his own terminology, Kāshānī follows his teacher, Mullā Sadrā,[34] maintaining the existence and attributes of God within his theosophical system.[35] Kāshānī affirms that God as the Pure Existence (*al-wujūd al-mahd*) is the cause, the source and the foundation of all things and all existence, the which that are placed in a hierarchical order of being (*maratib tashkīkīeh wujūd*).[36] Hence, since God is the source of all existence, His essence as well as His Names and Attributes, cannot be fully comprehended by these created beings. However, for the same reason all existence must affirm a direct primordial knowledge of God according to its own measure.[37] Kāshānī argues that just as God is at the base of all that exists, a direct witnessing of God must be at the root of all knowledge

(*ma`rifah*) whether conscious or unconscious.[38] Later, we will see how Kāshānī deals with the dilemma of God-man relationship.

We may find almost the same argumentation in Kāshānī's mystical approach to God. In his concise yet penetrating work, *Kalimāti Maknūnah*,[39] Kāshānī develops the concept of God as the Truth (*Haqq*) in a mystical context. Being is the Truth which subsists by Itself while everything else subsists by It. This Truth is One and Unique because it is self-subsisting and self-necessary. For if there were two such beings, both would be characterized by necessary existence.[40]

According to Kāshānī, there is no way of reaching the essence of the Truth since the Truth encompasses all things. Kāshānī argues that since everything is the manifestation of the One, they may not gain a profound knowledge of the essence of their source, except for the elite (*khawās*) who know what they see.[41]

Here Kāshānī uses an Ishraqi terminology, i.e. the concept of light,[42] to identify the Being as the Light. God is the Light which is hidden because of the excess of His Light.[43] Hence no veil can cover Him because every veil is a limitation and God surpasses all limitations. Contrarily, His Light encompasses everything so that every being or reality exists by His Light.[44] The Divine Names and Attributes (*asmā` wa sifāt*) are united with the Divine Essence, while conceptually distinct from each other.[45] The Name *Allah* is the source of all His Names, or if we are to use its mystical term, the mother of all Names (*ummul asmā`*).[46] Now the main question is how the human being (*al-insān*) can reach the realm of divinity as a created and limited being. To answer this, Kāshānī presents knowledge (*ma`rifah*) and love (*mahabbah*) as paths which enable a Gnostic (*`ārif*) to approach the Divine Horizon and taste the pleasure of His Presence.

Knowledge (*ma`rifah*) is the first and the most important step for man's ascend towards the Divine Realm. Thanks to the effective doctrine of his teacher, Mullā Sadrā, regarding the issue of knowledge

by presence (*al-`ilm al-hudūrī*),[47] Kāshānī develops the God-man relationship within the realm of intuitive knowledge. He argues that man can achieve an authentic relationship with his Creator through an intuitive knowledge (*al-ma`rifah al-shuhūdīyah*) that allows him to directly witness the Names and Attributes of God (*al-Asmā' wa al-Sifāt al-Ilāhīiyah*). Kāshānī explains his intuitive elaboration using the metaphorical model of the mirror. The perfect Gnostic sees the cosmos as a mirror in which Truth (*Haqq*) is reflected, and his own essence as a mirror in which both the cosmos and Truth are reflected.[48]

Of the whole universe, man alone may reach the station of annihilation (*fanā`*) in the Divine. However, according to Kāshānī, annihilation happens only when man (*insān*) attains the essential love (*al-hubb al-dhātī*) toward the Divine through purification and endeavor.[49]

Besides his philosophical, theological and mystical approaches to God, Kāshānī's fundamental understanding of God essentially originates from and depends on the Qurānic interpretation. Like his teacher, Mullā Sadrā, and his predecessor in ethics, Ghazālī, Kāshānī relies heavily on the Qurānic terminology in understanding as well as elaborating the very critical issue of God. We may conclude from Kāshānī's writings that God, as he understands and introduces in his rational approach as well as his traditional examination (like *tafsīr* and *hadīth*) is the God of the Holy Qurān.

The Qurān illustrates God as the Absolutely Transcendent and Incomparable Deity,[50] who sees, hears and speaks; the Almighty, the Omnipotent and the Omniscient. He is the Light of the heavens and the earth.[51] He so fills every place that "if you lower a rope into a well, it drops on Him."[52] He is with us wherever we are.[53] He is nearer to us than our jugular vein.[54] In the physical and moral worlds, He is described as the Doer of all actions.

Kāshānī revels in the descriptions of God in the Holy Qurān, because he sees no logical conflict in justify them through his rational methodology and mystical experience.[55]

II. Love of God in Islamic History

It is historically obvious that Islamic morality, particularly in its philosophical domain, has been highly influenced by the Aristotelian ethical system, namely his *Nicomachean Ethics*.[56] However, as we saw in the first chapter, some ethical themes are evidently absent from the *Nicomachean Ethics*. The virtue of love of God, its nature and types, its place in morality, and its relationship with the ultimate end and human perfection are some of those issues which we may not find in details in Aristotle's morality. Aristotle not only dismissed the issue of love of God as a moral virtue in his system, but also rejected any possibility of love of God. Aristotle affirmed that there can be no love between man and God because the distance between them is too great.[57]

However, a great number of thinkers from both lines of theological-philosophical thoughts, namely Islam and Christianity, have made numerous efforts to illustrate and develop the doctrine of love of God and adjust it within the whole moral system. So far, I have shed light on certain scholarly elaboration from both lines. In this chapter, I will acknowledge some Islamic doctrines on the issue, and in the following chapter I will discuss some Christian figures in this regard.

The discussion about love of God has a profound root in the history of Islamic thought, theology, philosophy, ethics and mysticism.[58] However, the origin of the discussion stems from Islamic religious tradition, namely the Holy Qurān and Hadīth (Prophet's sayings). According to Islamic teachings love and being lover (*Wadūd* and *yuhibbu*) are two important attributes of God. These attributes are

affirmed implicitly by numerous Qur'ānic verses.[59] However, God as the beloved (*mahbub*), is the highest and foremost object of love. These two aspects of Divine love are mentioned in one verse:

يُحِبُّهُم وَ يُحِبّونَه He loves them and they love Him. (5:57)

The Holy Qurān illustrates the love of God as the fundamental feature of both faith and morality. For the keen believers, love of God is the first priority in life. The Holy Qur'ān says:

> Say: "If your fathers and your sons, your brethren and your wives, your kinsfolk and the property you have acquired, the commerce you fear may slacken and the dwellings which you love-if these are dearer to you than God and His Apostle and striving in His way, then wait till God brings His command; God does not guide an ungodly people." (9:24)

This verse (*ayah*) clearly indicates that the love of God has precedence over everything and whatever that one may love in one's life. Moreover, the Holy Qur'ān points out in another verse that the believers' love of God is greater than that of anything else, but that some people love certain things as much as they love God:

> And there are some among men who take for themselves objects of worship besides God. Whom they love as they love God, and those who believe are stronger in love for God ... (2:165)

We see here a very bright link between love and faith. This connection is clearly mentioned by a prophetic tradition, in which the holy Prophet said, “Till a man loves God and His Prophet more than anything else, he has not the right faith.”[60] Hence, love for God is the foundation of belief on which man is to establish the principles of his faith. This is also affirmed by reason and traditional narration.

It is particularly argued that human nature aspires to perfection and beauty, and God is absolute perfection and eternal beauty; thus it is an innate quality of the human nature to love God. Furthermore, men by nature love whoever does good to them and appreciate such favor and benevolence. Kāshānī recalls a well known tradition in this regard:

> Generosity and magnanimity enslave men.[61] الانسان عَبيدُ الِاحسان

Since God is the source of all beings and of all generosity and benevolence, then man by virtue of his nature loves God. Therefore, God is the source of all love just as He is the source of all existence. The Prophet, peace be upon him, said:

> Love Allah because He has done good to you and He has bestowed favors upon you.[62]

It is narrated that God declared to Moses and David, may peace be upon them: "Love Me and endear Me to the people." When they asked Him how they could endear Him to the people, He replied:

> Remind them about My favors and bounties, for they do not recall My favors without the feeling of gratitude.[63]

According to the scripture and traditional narration, this love between man and his Creator is reciprocal, and the intensity of a people's love for God is indicative of God's love for them, as the following verse signifies:

> God will bring a people whom He loves and who love Him. (5:54)

This love forms a spiritual relationship between God and the God-loving people wherewith they are ever made aware of the beneficence and mercy of their Lord. It is narrated in a *hadīth qudsi* that when God loves someone, He becomes his ears, his eyes, his tongue, and his hands:

> When I love him, then I shall be his ears with which he listens, his eyes with which he sees, his tongue with which he speaks, and his hands with which he holds; if he calls Me, I shall answer him, and if he asks Me, I shall give to him.[64]

Aside from the fact that one who loves God is loved by Him, a real love for God prompts one to perform the best of deeds. Human intellect (*al-`aql*) and human nature (*al-fitrah*) indicate that if someone really loves God, he would act in a manner that is pleasing to God. In this regard, the Holy Qur'ān says:

> Say: "If you love God, then follow me, and God will love you and forgive you your sins," and God is Forgiving and Merciful. (3:31)

This *ayah* demonstrates the interrelation between love as an inner state and emulating the Prophet which is an outward action. Moreover, it implies that no one may neglect his religious obligations under the pretext of love for God.

This glimpse of the Islamic tradition confirms that we cannot overlook the role of the Holy Qurān, the traditions, the sermons, the polemical dialogues and the supplications in the development of Muslim thinkers' theory of love. In a more general observation, Nicholson states:

> Though Muhammad left no system of dogmatic or mystical theology, the Qur'ān contains the raw materials of both. Being the outcome of feeling rather than reflection, the

> Prophet's statements about God are formally inconsistent, and while Muslim scholastics have embodied in their creed the aspect of transcendence, the Sufis, following his example, have combined the transcendent aspect with that of immanence, on which, though it is less prominent in the Qur'ān, they naturally lay greater emphasis.[65]

After quoting some verses from the Holy Qurān, Nicholson continues:

> Surely the seeds of mysticism are here. And, for the early Sufis, the Qur'ān is not only the Word of God: it is the primary means of drawing near to Him.[66]

These traditional indications have fabricated significant outlines and guidelines for Muslim thinkers, including theologians, moralists and mystics, to the extent that most if not all of them assume their systematic approaches to love of God as expansions and interpretations of those wise remarks.

Here I don't want to judge whether the Muslim thinkers, including Kāshānī, have succeeded in correctly utilizing the inspiration provided by the Holy Qurān and Islamic tradition; I do intend to acknowledge that their main source of inspiration, at least in their mystical theory of love, lay within the Islamic tradition. To illustrate this claim, we may briefly look at the historical development of the issue, through certain intellectual horizons.

Many Muslim thinkers who have attempted to approach the issue of love of God through the mystical, theological and moral realms. From the numerous philosophers, theologians, moralists and mystics, I would like to reflect on three Muslim thinkers from three different horizons: a well known moralist, Ibn Miskawayh (D. 1030), a renowned Gnostic, Ibn `Arabī (1164-1240), and a famous theologian and philosopher, Nasīr al-Dīn Tūsī (1201-1274).[67]

I selected these figures who are representative of different intellectual domains, and approach the issue by relying on various methodological means, as the historical models which illustrate the background of Kāshānī's thought.

Moreover, as we will see, their methods and terminology have been highly considered and occasionally developed by Kāshānī. Therefore, this reflection would presumably constitute a major portion of our study of Kāshānī's discipline.

Ibn Miskawayh (D. 1030) is usually mentioned as the first Muslim thinker or the chief moral philosopher who presented a systematic ethical formula in a well organized set of writings.[68] Introducing Ibn Miskawayh's contribution to ethics, De Boer says:

> "He has left us a philosophical system of Ethics which up to this day is valued in the East. It is a combination of material taken from Plato, Aristotle, Galen, and the Muslim Religious Law, although Aristotle predominates in it."[69]

Ibn Miskawayh presented and developed his moral discipline in his most important Arabic work, *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq*.[70] Maintaining the separation between body and soul, Ibn Miskawayh argues that the man's soul is a simple, incorporeal substance which is conscious of its own existence, knowledge and working.[71] By relying on the Platonic and neo-Platonic doctrine, he also explains that human soul is immortal.[72] Based on this argumentation, the human soul has three characteristics: it should essentially possess life, it is free from matter, and it is a self moving entity.

Then Ibn Miskawayh uses the Plotinus' language to explain the upward and downward motion of the soul. He argues, as Fakhri remarks, that "as the soul moves upwards towards Reason, the first emanation from the One, it is filled with beauty and light, and as it moves downwards toward matter, its own light shines upon this matter."[73]

In the case of virtue, Ibn Miskawayh follows Aristotle in explaining that virtue is the perfection or excellence of the soul.[74] He, like Aristotle, describes each kind of virtue or moral character as a mean between two extremes, each of which is a vice. Ibn Miskawayh categorizes virtues into four primary types: wisdom (*al-hikmah*), purity (*al-`iffah*), courage (*al-shajā`ah*), and righteousness or justice (*al-`adālah*). A series of branches of virtues are then derived based on each of these cardinal virtues.[75]

In his major work on ethics, *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq*, Ibn Miskawayh has dedicated a chapter to love or friendship (*mahabbah*).[76] In this chapter, love is defined as friendship (*sadaqah*) and as a virtue classified under the category of righteousness or justice.[77] Ibn Miskawayh has basically employed the language of Plotinus to explain the impact of justice on the soul's nature and goal.[78] He confirms that the human soul, by its likeness to God, which comes through the virtue of justice, may be regarded as an object capable of being united with Him when it is set free from the impurities that come from contact with the material things of nature.[79] We see that the most important metaphysical elements - i.e. likeness to God, freedom from the material world, and finally unity with the Divine - used by Plotinus to set up his transcendent morality, are similarly applied here by Ibn Miskawayh. Ibn Miskawayh then deals with the relationship between love and pleasure. According to him, there are three types of goals toward which love and friendship could be directed: pleasure (*ladhdhat*), utility (*fā`idah*), and good (*khair*).[80] Consequently, love has been classified based on its cause or aim into three categories: love for pleasure, love for usefulness, and love for good. For Ibn Miskawayh, only the love which is grounded on and aimed towards good (*khair*) is a true and durable love.

Although love and friendship have been labeled as the primary duty or the foundation of all virtues in Ibn Miskawayh's moral system, he should not be considered among those who regarded the virtue of love as the most fundamental virtue in their ethical discipline. Love

and friendship as the foundation of all virtues have been presented by Ibn Miskawayh within particular sociological and political contexts. He affirms that the general love for humankind is the primary duty without which no society is possible.[81] He goes further and argues that to attain perfection, man should be among and accompany other human beings. By this statement, he states that Ethics must be Social Ethics.[82] To explain the relationship between man's love for himself and his friendship with others, Ibn Miskawayh refuses Aristotle's interpretation and states that friendship is not an expansion of self-love as Aristotle maintains, but a limitation of it. Therefore, self-love and friendship as well as virtue, can only be exercised within the society.[83]

To correlate man's relation to God with man's moral responsibility, Ibn Miskawayh states that "the obligation of men toward their Creator is to add all that is possible to their knowledge of Allah, that His unity may be fully appreciated." He adds that "they must fulfill their duties to Allah and direct their effort towards Him."[84] Ibn Miskawayh considers the highest level of love to be passionate love (*`ishq*), which is analogous to mystical rapture (*walah*) and identical with the 'Divine love' which some Divine men (*muta`allihūn*) claim to have experienced.[85] We can see the neo-Platonic influence in Ibn Miskawayh's understanding and interpretation of the notion of Divine love.

Ibn Miskawayh considers the love of God or Divine love as the means of achieving perfection, which is fulfilled through the union with the Divine. Ibn Miskawayh, like Plotinus, believes that the Divine union is the ultimate goal for the truly Divine men.[86] When man's soul has been cleansed of its sensuous accretions, it perceives the Pure and First Good with the eye of reason. It then hastens to meet Him; and the Pure Good causes it to attain a degree of union.[87] Hence, as we see in Plotinus' language, love of God is the best and most reliable mean to elevate the human being towards the Divine realm and grant him the ultimate goal, which is the perfection and unification with the Divine.

In summary, Ibn Miskawayh does not consider the love of God as a mere virtue which justifies spiritual actions and experiences of human life in this world. Rather, if we are to use a neo-Platonic terminology, the love of God is a supernatural means which promotes mans' supernatural goal of advancement toward perfection. According to Ibn Miskawayh, this perfection rests on the unification between the divinity and the Divine substance in human being. This mystical examination has been more profoundly developed by Muslim Gnostics in the periods after Ibn Miskawayh. To further contemplate the mystical relationship between man and God, which is derived from or achieved by love of God, I have chosen the well known Muslim Gnostic, Ibn `Arabī, who represents the mystical line of thinking in the Islamic intellectual discipline.

Ibn `Arabī (1164-1240),[88] approached the issue of love of God by relying on certain methodological features. Here I don't intend to reflect on Ibn `Arabī's entire metaphysical system, which would require a profound observation of his mystical and intellectual elaboration. Nor do I desire to engage in an intense examination of the theoretical aspects of love or the diversity in the historical development of the theory of love within the mystical and Sufi domain.[89] Instead, I shall focus on the love of God. However, I will explore the only aspect of the theory of love by which Ibn `Arabī's mystical understanding of human perfection connects with and adjusts to the virtue based moral discipline.

It is notable to mention that the historians do not presume Ibn `Arabī to be a moralist with a systematic ethic. Rather, they recognize him as a Muslim mystic (*`ārif*).[90] He has also been introduced by Nicholson as the greatest theosophist whom the Arabs have produced.[91] Hence, we are not looking for a methodical moral discipline in Ibn `Arabī's thought. To find his moral observations, we have to piece together his views from scattered pages of his works.

However, the reason I am referring to him here is that he, like many other theistic mystics, has profoundly considered the issue of

love of God as a fundamental objective in his mystical observation. He has used a very certain and strong language to determine the nature of love of God.[92] In this regard he declares that no religion is more sublime than a religion of love and longing for God. Love for Ibn `Arabī, like other Muslim Gnostics, is assumed to be the essence of all creeds[93] and the only basis of moral perfection and spiritual knowledge. Consequently, as Nicholson has frequently referred to, love is the supreme principle in Sufi ethics.[94]

The second reason I reflect on Ibn `Arabī here is the fact that, as I mentioned before, understanding Ibn `Arabī's doctrine and methodology helps us to better comprehend Kāshānī's mystical elaboration of love of God. Hence, the forthcoming consideration of Ibn `Arabī is a prerequisite for our topic.

In his two major works, i.e. *al-Futūhāt al-Makkīyah* and *Fusūs al-Hikam*,[95] Ibn `Arabī frequently examines love (*mahabbah*) and love of God, and interprets the nature of love within the framework of his cosmological and epistemological pantheism. It has been said that Ibn `Arabī does not give us an ethical system as defined by modern terminology, with some definite ideal to strive toward.[96]

Nevertheless, as we will see, what he confirms as an ethical point of view here adjusts with the whole system of pantheism,[97] particularly in the cases of love theory and human perfection.

Ibn `Arabī's metaphysics and cosmology maintain that only One real Being (the One) exists and the whole universe is the manifestation of the One.[98]

Based on this pantheistic doctrine, Ibn `Arabī develops the transcendent foundation of his ethics by affirming that the One and only Reality, which is Divine, contains the love and beauty that are the ultimate end to human perfection. According to Ibn `Arabī Divine love fundamentally underlies all manifestations of the One Reality.

Regarding the final end of human being, Ibn `Arabī considers the ultimate aim as the realization of the essential union of the lover and the Beloved. God or the One is Love and Love is God; so the ultimate end is the full recognition of the Principle of Love which pervades and unites the Whole.[99] However, the unification which deserves the ultimate end is not merely an ecstatic union, rather it is the realization of the knowledge that Reality (the One) is the highest goal. As a matter of fact, Muslim thinkers have offered different interpretations regarding unification with the One as the highest goal. One interpretation is offered by Ghazālī,[100] whose doctrine we will examine in the following discussion, and the other by Ibn ‘Arabī. For Ibn `Arabī, as Nasr explains,

> Union implies that God becomes the subject who sees through the eyes of man and hears through his ears. In the second mode, man is plunged in God so that he sees through God and hears though Him according to the well-known sacred hadīth.[101]

It is not difficult to understand Ibn `Arabī’s determination of Divine Love as the final end or ultimate perfection for humanity if we examine it within his whole system. For Ibn `Arabī, final unification with God is the ultimate end not only for humanity, but also for the whole universe.This unification is possible through a means called love in Ibn `Arabī’s language. However, this love has its own end which is beauty and perfection. He insists that the basis and the cause of all love is Beauty.

Here, we see an obvious difference between Ibn `Arabī and Ibn Miskawayh. For the latter, the cause of love is the Good (*al-khair*) and for the former, the cause of love is Beauty (*al-jamāl*). Nonetheless, we finally reach the conclusion that these are certain names for the One Reality.[102] Following the steps of Ibn Sina on this point, Ibn `Arabī states that love as the prime mover in all things directs them all towards the attainment of the Ultimate Beauty, who is also the

Eternally Perfect. We love God because God is Beautiful and Perfect. God also loves us and all of His creation because He loves beauty.[103]

God's Beauty is the source of all beauty. Therefore, Ibn `Arabī adds that God ought to be loved and worshiped, and it is how a perfect Gnostic knows Him, Loves Him, and Worships Him.[104]

As a matter of fact, the real perfection in the morality of Ibn `Arabī develops through this love, which causes the lover to become united with the Beloved, the Most Perfect Being. These mystical considerations imply the transcendence of God and that the soul cannot reach Him without taking what Plotinus in a splendid phrase calls "the flight of the alone to the Alone."

Regarding man's relationship to God in attaining perfection, Ibn `Arabī uses a new mystical term, *walāyat*, carrying the meaning of friendship with God.[105] A perfect man (*insāni kāmil*), in the vision of Ibn `Arabī, is one who has been able to achieve this special friendship and become God's friend (*waliy Allah*).[106]

Here again, perfection and unification are highly admired and considered as the ultimate end. We also see the fact that love of God for Ibn `Arabī, like his preceding moralist, is a transcendent means for human perfection and unification. In spite of the many similarities between these two thinkers' terminology and final conclusions we have so far observed obvious differences in the background on which they rely, as well as their methodological perspectives.

Ibn `Arabi, like his fellow Sufis, evidently adopts the symbolic style because there is no other possible way of interpreting their mystical experience.[107] Ibn 'Arabi says "Gnostics cannot impart their feelings to other men; they can only indicate them symbolically to those who have begun to experience the like."[108] But the kind of symbolic presentation each mystic prefers depends on his temperament and character.

We will also see differences in methodology and doctrine in the following examination of the third Muslim figure. However, the known facts we have understood so far well illustrate the historical development of the same single concept within different fields and across various borders.

Nasīr al-Dīn Tūsī (1201-1274)[109] is recognized as one of the most influential Muslim figures in both philosophical and ethical realms. As Dabashi remarks, Tūsī's writings on ethics, as an independent philosophical category, represent some of the most prominent earlier Muslim philosophers, such as Fārābī and Ibn Miskawayh.[110] Besides the Holy Qurān and Hadīth, Tūsī relied on the Greek philosophical tradition among the sources for his ethical writings.[111]

Tūsī has elaborated the issue of love as well as love of God or Divine love in his two well known moral works entitled *Akhlāqi Nasiri (The Nasirian Ethics),* and *Akhlāqi Muhtashami* (*the Ruler's Ethics*). In the former work, Tūsī allocated a section to the issue of love titled "Second Section: On the Virtue of Love."[112] In the very beginning of the section, Tūsī raises the question of human perfection and argues that because Man has been created with a natural inclination towards perfection, he has a natural yearning for the synthesis called Love.[113]

To elucidate the nature of love, Tūsī states:

> "Since the true nature of love is the quest for union with that thing with which the seeker conceives it perfection to be united; … the perfection and nobility of each existent thing is in accordance with the unity that has been effused upon it; therefore, love is the quest for nobility and virtue and perfection."[114]

Then he compares the virtue of love and the virtue of justice. Tūsī maintains that love requires a natural union whereas justice requires an artificial union. He goes on to say that although justice is

the most perfect of human virtues, it arises from the loss of love because "if love were to accrue between individuals, there would be no necessity for equity and impartiality."[115]

This argumentation could presumably be used to justify the qualification of the theory of love or love based moral theory in directing and formulating practical morality in the individual and social areas. In the following discussion, we will further discuss this assumption.

On the typology of love, Tūsī follows Ibn Miskawayh[116] in terminology and method.[117] Like Ibn Miskawayh, Tūsī classifies love into three categories based the causes of love which are Good (*khair*), Pleasure (*ladhdhat*) or Profit (*manfa`at*).[118] The three categories are love for pleasure, love for usefulness and love for good; the latter being the noblest and the most enduring, being affiliated with the pure good, which is not corruptible or changeable.[119] Tūsī adds the love of wisdom[120] and defines it as the preoccupation with intellectual concerns and the employment of Divine opinions. The pleasure achieved from this type of love is a wonderful pleasure and a strange delight.

To support this idea, Tūsī affirms that "anyone attaining the reality of Wisdom knows that the pleasure thereof is above all pleasures, and hence pays no heed to any other pleasure, nor abides in any state other than Wisdom.[121] Consequently, wisdom or the intellectual facet of the human soul, for which we use a single word, *knowledge* (*ma`rifah*), deserves a very significant role in Tūsī's moral discipline.

Tūsī believes that knowledge (*ma`rifah*) is a prerequisite for any kind of virtue, including the virtue of love, and the principal basis for any kind of ethical behavior and moral virtue. For example, one may attain the love of God when one knows God and strive to advance toward Him through knowledge of Him. Tūsī insists "how can there be love in one who has no knowledge of Him (God) and is unaware of His

graces?" Therefore, such love can belong only to the man of Divine Learning.[122]

Tūsī further explains that this knowledge (*ma`rifah*) is the chief prerogative of humanity upon which all possibilities of ethical behavior are contingent. However, knowledge and deeds are the two complementary dimensions of moral characters. They reflect each other to the extent that the nobility of knowledge leads to virtuous deeds.[123] Tūsī adds that absolute obedience to God is the chief guardian of virtuous behavior.

Hence, we see in Tūsī's morality a combination of knowledge and love which exalts the human soul towards perfection and unification. Of course, each one of knowledge and love has its own role in this process. We also learn from Tūsī that knowledge can fulfil its appropriate role in that process when and only when it leads us to practical engagement.

Following these explanatory remarks, Tūsī identifies the nature of love of God and its role in human morality:

> In man, however, there is to be found a simple, Divine substance having no affinity with other natures, and he can enjoy thereby a class of pleasure having no similarity to other pleasures. The love producing this pleasure is excessive in the extreme, being like to distraction, and it is known as Utter Passion and Divine Love.[124]

Evidently on the one hand Tūsī distinguishes the subject of this love, which is a Divine substance, from other kinds of natures. On the other hand, he identifies a specific pleasure produced by this very extreme love, namely Divine Love. This very certain and strong language helped Tūsī to finally confirm that if man implied wants to achieve the highest level of happiness and pleasure, he or she must fulfil it only through Divine Love. Moreover, the element of action

which must accompany knowledge as we discussed before, is a key element for achieving this significant love. In this regard, Tūsī says:

> The pretenders to love of God are many, but the true practitioners among them are few, nay fewer than few. Obedience and veneration are never absent from such true love: "Few of My servants are grateful."[125]

Fakhri observes that according to Tūsī, only the love of God of which the genuine philosopher partakes is free from all vicissitudes and imperfections and is attended by that unalloyed blessedness which God confers on those of His servants that He has elected, as a Divine favor.[126]

This is the highest mode of happiness of which man can partake. In the process of reaching this great happiness, man must not content himself with human aspirations, but he must spend all his energy achieving that truly noble Divine condition.[127]

What seems obvious from Tūsī's consideration of Divine love or love of God is that he clearly links Divine love or love of God to the whole moral system and adjusts it within the process of attaining perfection. Tūsī, Ibn Miskawayh and Ibn `Arabī share identical methodology regarding the practical dimension of love of God as a moral virtue.

Tūsī believed that the highest degree of felicity, which is not comparable to other pleasures and cannot be related to any other pleasure, occurs when man achieves the presence and the Majesty of the Pure Good or the Source of all goods. This presence is the manifestation or the result of the union that man's soul has achieved through knowledge and love.

Man may attain only this station after a very difficult struggle in which purifies man of the turbidity of nature; and a complete purity can result only after departing this transient life.[128] Here Tūsī quotes

from Aristotle that the complete and unalloyed felicity belongs to those allowed to approach the Divine Presence.[129]

Although the ultimate end and the highest degree of pleasure will be thoroughly achieved in another life, the hard work and preparative actions toward that end should take place in this life. At this juncture we see Tūsī harmonize the process of purification which is attainable by knowledge and love, with the moral development of man's daily life. It is understood from Tūsī that he is seeking a transcendent goal through striving hard in the natural, earthly life.

According to Tūsī, the manifestation of pure love in the development of man's moral discipline is very obvious. To explain, Tūsī argues that a man, who has knowledge of the course of good and the awareness of its pleasure, chooses the highest, most complete and grandest of the various categories of pleasures. So here knowledge (*ma`rifah*) helps man recognize the eminent felicity from various kinds of pleasure. Tūsī calls this the pleasure of the Divine part. One who adopts this course follows the acts of God, enjoys true pleasures, benefits friends and others by supererogation, munificence and charity, and possesses the capacity for vigor and greatness of soul beyond that of his peers.[130] Hence, the real lover of Almighty God is the man good by nature and virtuous by innate dispositions, who desires virtues and goods, presenting adequacy in his practice and action.[131]

Here I don't want to compare these figures or contrast their metaphysical or ethical systems. Nor do I claim that these Muslim thinkers represent the whole doctrine of Islamic morality. I just want to get some guidance from their different approaches toward the problem of love of God and its related themes, to better understand our thinker's thought on the same issue.

As we have seen, Ibn Miskawayh, Ibn `Arabī and Tūsī recognized certain profound key points. First, they acknowledged a deep connection between the love of God and human perfection in their doctrines. Secondly, they determined love to be the quest for

nobility and perfection as the ultimate end. Relying on the same terminology, they indicated that love is a(the) means for unity.

However, according to Ibn `Arabī human perfection comes through the Divine unification which arises from the whole pantheistic system, while for Tūsī it comes through purification and action, and for Ibn Miskawayh it comes through the vision on God resulting from the fulfillment of the duties. It seems that all of these figures are seeking one reality but using certain terminological presentations; that reality is the achievement of the Divine unification as the ultimate end through three fundamental elevating steps: knowledge, love and action.

We shall not overlook the role and impact of Greek tradition in our figures' moral discipline, particularly that of Ibn Miskawayh and Tūsī. Regarding the moral works Ibn Miskawayh and Tūsī, Hourani asserts that "these works follow a settled tradition of Hellenic philosophy in Arabic, dealing with the perfection and ends of the soul, virtues as means and vices as extremes." Regarding their intellectual background and philosophical framework in which they elaborate their moral contributions, Hourani confirms that they are "taken from Aristotle, the Peripatetics, and Neoplatonism."[132]

The synthesis of the ethical, mystical and philosophical lines of thought in addition to Ghazālī's moral cultivation and Mullā Sadrā's intellectual theosophy merge to provide a promise ground for Kāshānī to create and develop a moral discipline based on love of God.

In another words, one can say that an Aristotelian moral demonstration represented by Miskawayh and Tūsī, and a Neoplatonic mystical observation bestowed by Ibn `Arabī and Mullā Sadrā, synthesize with a traditional orientation presented and developed by Ghazālī, to establish Kāshānī's moral discipline. This synthesis helped Kāshānī integrate the earlier branches of Islamic moral thought into a unified discipline upon which he constructed his virtue based moral system.

III. Love of God as a 'Virtue' in Kāshānī's Ethics

Based on our brief yet illustrative historical observation, we may find an easier way to acknowledge Kāshānī's understanding and interpretation of 'love of God' and its application as a virtue within his moral system.

Kāshānī's love theory is highly influenced by all three doctrines mentioned above. To have a better and more accurate understanding of Kāshānī's approach to the problem of love and love of God, we should consider the main elements in the above mentioned doctrines which have merged together as a synthesis to form the fundamental ground for Kāshānī's love theory. As we will see, Kāshānī depends on both traditional language and mystical (Gnostic) inquiry.

Grounded on his understanding of the two fundamental concepts of love and God, Kāshānī combines them to indicate the highest level of virtuous fulfillment in his moral system that is the love of God. Furthermore, love of God, according to Kāshānī, is the final aim and the highest station (*maqām*).[133] For Kāshānī, all the moral virtues such as yearning (*shawq*), intimacy (*uns*) and satisfaction (*ridā*) are derived from the love of God. To explore his doctrine of love of God, Kāshānī deals with its meaning, its process and its signs.[134]

Kāshānī and Ghazālī similarly elaborate the meaning of love of God.[135] As we have seen before, both indicate that love is the inclination of nature to something that is pleasure giving. It is the soul that apprehends God and His Names, is inclined toward Him, and naturally loves Him after knowing and apprehending His Beauty. So, according to Kāshānī and Ghazālī, love of God is defined as the inclination of man's nature when his soul derives pleasure through apprehending His beautiful Attributes. This inclination is the disposition of the virtue of love.[136]

Kāshānī argues that when we examine the issue of love of God in a moral context, we find that God alone is worthy of our love and that if one does not love Him, it is because he does not know Him. In an even more elevated mystical indication, Kāshānī states that whatever we love in anyone or anything, we love because it is a reflection of Him.[137] Hence, love of God is the only true form of love. Kāshānī demonstrates his reasoning in the following way.

There are several reasons for human love, three of which are mentioned here. The first reason is that man loves himself and the perfection of his own nature and attributes. Even when he loves property, children, friends and so on, he loves them because they are means of his perfection and the continuation of his existence.[138] Thus, Kāshānī plainly demonstrates that this self-love is the primary love and the basis of other human loves.

The second reason for love is beneficence or doing good (*al-ihsān*). Human being by nature (*bil-fitrah*) loves anyone who does good to him. Because loving a person for his benefit and good deeds is loving not him but his beneficial and good acts. Therefore, love of him ends with the termination of his act, and increases or decreases according to the increase or decrease in the act.[139] As a matter of fact, according to Kāshānī, the object of this kind of love is an abstract, non-physical entity.

Kāshānī's third reason for or cause of love is the case that in which man naturally (*bil-fitrah*) loves something or somebody for itself without receiving any benefit from it/him. For example, loving beauty (*jamal*) and goodness (*khair*) is a kind of love that naturally occurs for man even if he doesn't receive any benefit from the object. Beauty consists of the perfection befitting of a thing, and so beauty varies for all beings. Inner beauty good quality is perceptible by intellect (*`aql*) or heart (*qalb*). Apprehension of inner beauty, like that of outer beauty, gives pleasure to the perceiver, and consequently his nature will be inclined to it, i.e. he will love it.[140]

After all reasoning, Kāshānī continues to argue that loving God surpasses all kinds of love that a human being experiences in his life. When all these reasons are united in one person, the love for him must be doubled, and if these are of an extreme degree, he will be loved exceedingly. Since all reasons and their extreme degree can only refer to God, it is only He to whom love in its real sense is due.[141]

Kāshānī says that the first reason, self-love, necessitates love of God because the existence, perfection and continuation of the self are all from Him alone. Concerning the second reason, Kāshānī confirms that as for man's love of one who does good to him, it demands that he should love God only, since the being who in reality does good to him is God. God is the real source of all kinds of benefits. With respect to the third reason, Kāshānī explains that love for a benefactor only because he is a benefactor and not because of any favor from him, also requires love for God, for it is He who is the real Benefactor of all creatures. Love of inward beauty also necessitates love of God alone, because inward beauty, i.e. beauty of the good attributes, is present in Him in perfect degree.[142] Therefore, all the reasons for love in their supreme degree can only refer to God, and hence it is only He to whom love in its real sense is due.[143]

Then Kāshānī goes to another stage of his reflection on the issue of love of God, i.e. the signs of love of God.[144] In this regard, he demonstrates a notable number of signs, including actions and behaviors, for those who really love God. Kāshānī explains one who truly loves God inwardly and outwardly (*bātinan wa dhāhiran*) prefers what God likes to what he desires. He refrains from following his passions and committing sin, persists in worshiping God, and does not become exhausted, lazy or weak in serving his Beloved. His mind is never free from the remembrance of God, and his tongue never tires from mentioning God's Name, since a true lover never forgets his Beloved. Solitude and discourse with God are what he likes most.[145] These are some fruits of the love of God that mostly appear in man's personal relationship with God.

Kāshānī also mentions some other fruits or signs of love that pertain to the man's moral behavior and social conduct. For instance, a real lover of God constantly persists in arduous good deeds and sacrifices himself for others. Because he loves God, he loves all that relates to God; so this man's social behavior as well as his relationship to others are shaped by and based on his love of God.[146]

Finally, the real lover of God keeps his love a secret between himself and his Beloved, and strives to make his Beloved aware of his love for Him. While loving God, he also fears Him for His Majesty and Greatness (*Jalāl*). It should be noted that this kind of fear is called piety (*taqwā*) in the Islamic tradition. This kind of fear is not incompatible with love since the fear arises from the apprehension of His Greatness (*Jalālihi*) while the love emanates from the knowledge of His Beauty (*Jamālihi*).[147] Lastly, the real lover of God wishes to meet his Beloved. Since he cannot meet Him unless he leaves this world through death he wishes for death. He is intimate with God and satisfied with His Decree.

Approaching the last stage of his discussion of love of God, Kāshānī recommends two major paths for the attainment and strengthening of this virtue.[148] First, man should shed the love for any other than God; detaching his soul from worldly inclinations. Kāshānī explains that when the love of others vacates the soul, the love for Him finds a place there.[149]

To strengthen one's love for Him Kāshānī suggests increasing one's knowledge of Him. When Kāshānī speaks of knowledge of God, he means an intuitive knowledge (*al-`ilm al-shuhudi*) which produces a joy and a pleasure that do not end with death.[150] To the Gnostic, Kāshānī recommends knowing God first and then knowing His works. To the weak, he recommends knowing God through His works. In either case, one has to first purify the soul and heart through the constant remembrance of Him. Only then does God's Greatness becomes as clear as being seen with the physical eyes.[151] This purification of the soul and heart, according to Kāshānī, prepare an

appropriate ground for the knowledge (*ma`rifah*) one needs to strengthen his love. The more knowledge one achieves about God and His attributes, the more and stronger love one experiences in one's relationship with God.[152] However, because of the infinity of God, this process can never be complete, but it can produce the love of God.

It is notable that the two above-mentioned ways of obtaining knowledge namely from creature towards the Truth (*min al-khalq ila al-Haq*) and from the Truth towards the creature (*min al-Haq ila al-khalq*) have been considered the principal methods for approaching the Divine realm. These two methodological approaches have been highly respected and developed by Kāshānī's master, Mullā Sadrā, and employed by him not only in his moral theory but also in his entire system of transcendental theosophy (*al-hikmah al-muta`āliyah*).[153]

To understand the link between the love of God and human perfection, we have to reflect on Kāshānī's interpretation of human perfection. The ultimate happiness, as Kāshānī remarks, consists of nearness to Allah and eternally gazing upon His Glorious Face.[154] The pleasure of the vision of God or the encounter with Him is the utmost happiness, the ultimate good and the last of God's bounties. This grade is attainable through the *virtue of love of God*. Therefore, perfection, which comes through *virtue*, is the same as nearness (*qurb*) to Allah. In Kāshānī's moral system, love of God is the highest and only virtue that enables man to gain nearness to God, and consequently arrive at the Divine perfection and ultimate happiness. Kāshānī emphasizes that love of God can be attained only in this life, although it assures man of ultimate happiness in the hereafter. Ultimate happiness involves degrees in proportion to the strength of man's love of God. One who reaches the zenith of the love for God in this life, can realize the vision of God (*ru`yat Allah*) in the hereafter.[155]

Now we have to adjust the transcendental and metaethical elements used by Kāshānī to his understanding and elaboration of man's ultimate happiness. First, he explains that this final happiness and Divine perfection is achievable only in another life. Second, he

argues that one may reach the level of perfection and final happiness through the love of God. However, love of God, according to Kāshānī, should be obtained in this life. Hence, by achieving the appropriate means of final happiness in this life, which is love of God, man promotes himself toward Divine perfection.

Therefore, in the eyes of Kāshānī, we see a theological and moral link between this life and the life after which is man's final destiny. Consequently, for Kāshānī, he who supposes that it is possible to enjoy happiness in the next world apart from the love of God is far gone in error. Kāshānī adds that if one had no delight, in God here, he will not delight in Him then, and if one's joy in God was but slight here, it will be slight then.

In brief, one may gather from Kāshānī that man's future happiness will be in strict proportion to the degree to which he/she has loved God here. Loving God in this world (*dunyā*) not only contrives and justifies the moral aspect of human life, but also formulates and identifies the human destiny in the hereafter (*ākherah*). Hence, love of God plays a dual role in Kāshānī's moral discipline; dealing with both aspects of human life.

The relationship between God and man also has a significant role in Kāshānī's love-based moral theory. Love produces this relationship which leads man to Divine nearness, is produced by love and love is produced by knowledge and action (*`ilm* and *`amal*).[156] Therefore, man has been urged to love God and to nurture this love through gaining higher levels of knowledge (*ma`rifah*) and performing more good deeds.[157] The more an act promotes this love, the greater is its moral worth.

It suffices to love God more than any other, but the perfect love is very intense and is called passionate love (*`ishq*).[158] This love equals the attainment of the highest perfection, which is nearness to Allah. When such a relationship develops between man and God, man

experiences the state of annihilation (*fanā*`)[159] that Kāshānī sometimes refers to as the goal of the moral life.[160]

So far, we have seen how these three elements, namely love, knowledge and action, function together in Kāshānī's moral theory. Through these three principles, Kāshānī elaborates his systematic ethics to illuminate a practical prescription for man's moral life. Of course, there are different grades for each of these elements. A certain level of virtue results from a specific grade of God-man relationship and leads the virtuous man to a certain grade of God-nearness. To elevate from one level to the other, one has to fulfill more action and obtain the higher level of virtue. Finally, perfection, which refers to a higher grade of *virtue* (*fadilat*), will lead to yet a higher level of happiness.

To sum up this chapter, one may argue that Kāshānī has employed the principle of *virtue of love of God* to fulfill his moral theory. The way he explains this fulfillment could be summarized as follows. The highest goal of human moral life is eternal happiness and pleasure. This happiness is obtained by the nearness to the Almighty Allah.

The nearness is achievable through love, which emanates from knowledge and action. Through this *virtue*, man is able to perform more good deeds, promote his love, purify his soul, develop his relationship with God, and attain the human perfection which leads him to a higher level of nearness to Allah (God). By obtaining this nearness, a virtuous man is able to reach eternal happiness and pleasure. Furthermore, based on Kāshānī's moral system, humankind can achieve eternal happiness by developing moral virtues in both action and character, while, to the contrary, moral corruption and vices lead him to everlasting wretchedness. Therefore, it is necessary for man to purify himself of all evil character traits and adorn his soul with all ethical virtues, including the love of God.

At this point, we may point out that Kāshānī's doctrine of human perfection does not lead him towards the idea of crude pantheism which the more extreme forms of Sufism claimed. We may argue that Kāshānī rejects the idea of crude pantheism such as identification or unification (*ittihād*), incarnation (*hulul),* inherence or joining (*wusul*) with God. For Kāshānī, as we have seen before, human perfection means achieving higher level of nearness to Allah, which is attainable through purification and righteousness.

Here, God is regarded not merely as a higher good but as a transcendent good. As this level, God really does qualify as the supervenient common end. Pleasure, love, virtue are all good only because and to the extent that they point to Him; are clues to His nature, aspects of His service, or parts of the life He intended for us.

To conclude, I would like to mention that Kāshānī intends to derive from his theory of love, a mystical and intuitive doctrine of nearness to the One through which man is able to function morally and spiritually in a Divine manner.

As we have seen before the Holy Qurān and the Islamic tradition reveal this mystical and intuitive. Nicholson explains this in the following:

> The doctrine of a mystical union imparted by Divine grace goes beyond anything in the Qur'ān, but is stated plainly in apocryphal traditions of the Prophet, e.g. God said, "My servant draws night unto Me by works of supererogation, and I love him; and when I love him, I am his ear, so that he hears by Me, and his eye, so that he sees by Me, and his tongue, so that he speaks by Me, and his hand, so that he takes by Me."[161]

The narration of this Divine tradition or sacred hadīth (*al-hadīth al-qudsī*), which is accepted and interpreted by all Muslim sects, regardless of their differences in *shari`ah* (Islamic law),[162] could be assumed as the best fruit for Kāshānī's elaboration of the love of God.

Finally, even though Kāshānī, like his partner in ethics, Ghazālī,[163] founded his virtue ethics on an Aristotelian model, using Aristotle's methodology as well as his virtue theory, yet the issue of love of God, to my understanding, is the principal division between Kāshānī and Aristotle's system. Aristotle not only dismissed the love of God as a moral virtue in his system, but also rejected any possibility of love of God. Aristotle claimed that there can be no love between man and God because the distance between them is too great.[164]

In closing, certain questions arise. The foremost involves the extent to which Kāshānī is able to adjust the virtue of love of God in his entire moral system. Secondly, does Kāshānī's understanding and interpretation of love of God help him count on this virtue as the main virtue and the principle means in the process of human perfection? And finally, what are the similarities and differences between Kāshānī's and Malebranche's understanding and interpretation of the love of God? The answer to these questions will be comparatively scrutinized and critically analyzed in the sixth chapter, after we examine Malebranche's elaboration in the following chapter.

Notes:

[1] See Bell, *Love Theory in Late Hanbalite Islam* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1979), p. 148.

[2] Joseph Bell, for instance, has remarked that in early centuries of Islam, the discussions of love appeared in a variety of contexts, including theological, ethical, sociological, ascetical, mystical, and so on. See Joseph Norment Bell, *Love Theory in Late Hanbalite Islam* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1979), pp. 8-9.

[3] In Psychology, for instance, the ambiguity and complexity of the notion of love is still under consideration. Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) said, "We really know very little about love." See Elizabeth Dreyer, "Love," in Michael Downey, ed. *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1993), p. 619.

[4] As I employ the English words "love" and "friendship," they stand for two sets of words that Kāshānī freely interchanged in some cases. Etymologically, various

Arabic verbs with *hababa* at their root—*habbaba, tahabbaba, yuhibbu, mahabbah* and *hubb* itself refer to "love." There are also various Arabic terms other than *mahabbah* behind "love," such as *`ishq, showq, `uns* and *ridā*. The Arabic verbs—*sadaqa, akhawa, wadda,* as well as various words with *akhawa, wadda,* and *sadaqa* at their root (*ukhuwwat, akhilla`, khalīl, Wadūd, sadīq* and *asdiqā`*) refer to "friendship."

[5] Kāshānī, MB, vol. 8, p. 8.

[6] Kāshānī, MB, vol. 8, p. 8. However, in this regard, Nasr indicates that "the technical term used for love by later Sufie is *`ishq*, a non-Qurānic term implying intense love." See S. H. Nasr (ed.), *Islamic Spirituality* (New York, 1987), p. 321.

[7] Kāshānī, MB, vol. 8, p. 8.

[8] Kāshānī, HM, p. 175; MB, vol. 8, p. 9.

[9] See Reynold A. Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam* (London, 1914) p. 112.

[10] Bell, *Love Theory in Late Hanbalite Islam* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1979), p. 189.

[11] Kāshānī, HM, p. 175; MB, vol. 8, p. 9.

[12] See Bell, *Love Theory in Late Hanbalite Islam* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1979), p. 148. For Aristotle's view on love's classification, see Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics, Book VIII, 1,* 1156 a.

[13] Tūsī, *The Nasirian Ethics,* p. 197.

[14] Tūsī, The Nasirian Ethics, p. 197. Before Tūsī, we may also find the same classification in the writings of Ibn Miskawayh. See Majid Fakhri, *Ethical Theories in Islam* (New York, 1994), pp. 115-117; Dwight M. Donaldson, *Studies in Muslim Ethics* (London, 1953), p. 130.

[15] See A. E. Affifi, *The Mystical Philosophy of Muhyid Din-Ibnul `Arabi* (Cambridge, 1939), p. 171.

[16] *Ibid*., Affifi here is quoting from Ibn `Arabi's *Futuhat*, II, p. 437.

[17] *Ibid*., Affifi here is quoting from Ibn `Arabi's Futuhat, II, p. 441.

[18] *Ibid*., pp. 172-3.

[19] To see different categories and lists of the stages of love in more details, see Bell, *Love Theory in Late Hanbalite Islam* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1979), pp. 157-160.

[20] Bell, *Love Theory in Late Hanbalite Islam* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1979), p. 160. The words between brackets [ ] are mine.

[21] *Ibid*., p. 159. Bell is citing this list from Ghazālī's *Ihyā`*. The words between brackets [ ] are mine.

[22] See Kāshānī, MB, vol. 8, pp. 8, 90-91.

[23] MB, vol. 8, pp. 9-15.

[24] Kāshānī, MB, vol. 8, pp. 9-10.

[25] *Ibid*., p. 11.

[26] *Ibid*., pp. 11-12.

[27] *Ibid*., pp. 12-15.

[28] *Ibid*., p. 15.

[29] Kāshānī, KM, pp. 85-88.

[30] Hadīth *Qudsi* or sacred hadīth is a Divinely inspired utterance by the prophet Muhammad quoting God as saying something but one which is not regarded as part of the revelation that makes up the Holy Qurān. For more details, see William Graham, *Divine Word and Prophetic Word in Early Islam* (The Hague, 1977), pp. 184-185.

[31] Kāshānī, KM, pp. 33, 85. This well known hadīth has received a number of interpretations mostly by Muslim Mystics. For more details, see W. Chittick, *The Sūfī Path of Love* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1983), pp. 48, 194-231.

[32] Kāshānī refers to this love as the source of all kinds of love. See, for instance, Kāshānī, KM, p. 85-87; HM, p. 177; MB, vol. 1, pp. 300-301, vol. 8, pp. 16-17; and UM, p. 34.

[33] See Ghazālī, *Ihyā`*, XIV, pp. 96, 99.

[34] In chapter 2, we considered Kāshānī's life and thought and the influential and scholarly relationship between Kāshānī and his master, Mullā Sadrā Shīrāzī.

[35] See UM, pp. 6-17. On Mullā Sadrā's theosophical doctrine about God and His attributes, see Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullā Sadrā* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1976), pp. 125-194; "The God-World Relationship in Mullā Sadrā," in G. Hourani, (ed.), *Essays on Islamic Philosophy and Science* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1975), pp. 238-253.

[36] UM, pp. 14-17.

[37] *Ibid*., p. 21.

[38] *Ibid*., p. 32-33.

[39] To introduce this work, Nasr rightly indicates that gnosis, *Hikmat*, and *shar`* are blended in characteristic fashion in this book, as one of the important treatises of Kāshānī. See S. H. Nasr, "The School of Ispahan," in M. M. Sharif (ed.), *History of Muslim Philosophy* (Kempten: Wiesbaden, 1966), vol. 2, p. 927.

[40] Kāshānī, KM, pp. 35-42; UM, p. 14.

[41] See Nasr, "The School of Ispahan," vol. 2, p. 927.

[42] On Ishraqi examination of the concept of light in their philosophy, see Hossein Ziai, The Illuminationist Tradition," in S. H. Nasr, (ed.), *History of Islamic Philosophy* (New York, 1996), vol. 1, pp. 465-496. See also S. H. Nasr, "Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi Maqtul," in M. M. Sharif (ed.), *A History of Muslim Philosophy* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1963), vol. I, pp. 372-398.

[43] This statement is usually expressed by a well known Arabic maxim:

يا مَن هُوَ اختَفى لِفَرطِ نورِهِ

See Kāshānī, HM, pp. 186-188.

[44] Kāshānī, KM, pp. 9-10, 15-16; see also Nasr, "The School of Ispahan," vol. 2, p. 927-928.

[45] *Ibid*., pp. 19-20.

[46] *Ibid*., p. 116.

[47] On the nature of knowledge by presence and Mullā Sadrā's opinion in this regard, see S. M. R. Hejazi, *Knowledge by Presence (al-`ilm al-hudūrī): A Comparing Study Between Suhrawardī and Mullā Sadrā Shīrāzī* (M.A. Thesis), Montreal, Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, 1995

[48] Kāshānī, KM, pp. 28-29.

[49] *Ibid*., pp. 112-114; UM, p. 75. See also Nasr, "The School of Ispahan," vol. 2, p. 929.

[50] The Holy Qurān, Sura al-Ikhlas, verse 2-5.

[51] The Holy Qurān, Sura al-Nur 24, verse 35. There are certain verses mentioned in the Holy Qurān for each of God's Attributes. For instance, *Basīr* (the Seer) in surah 2, verse 96; *Samī`* (the Hearer) in sura 2, verse 127; *`Alīm* (Omniscient) in surah 2, verse 29; *Qadīr* (Omnipotent) in surah 6, verse 37; *Muta`ālī* (Almighty) in surah 13, verse 9.

[52] Kāshānī has narrated almost the same Prophetic *hadīth*, which is very closed to this tradition. See his *al-Mahajjah*, vol. 1, p. 216.

[53] The Holy Qurān, surah 57, verse 4.

[54] The Holy Qurān, Surah 50, verse 16.

[55] See Kāshānī, KM, pp. 19-23, UM, pp. 24-28, 30-37; MB, vol. 8, pp. 22-24.

[56] For the influence of Aristotelian ethics on the Muslim philosophers, see M. Fakhry, *Ethical Theories in Islam* (New York, 1994), pp. 78-92.

[57] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 8. 7. 1159a 3-4. It seems that for Aristotle, like other philosophers who followed him, love is not categorized as a virtue; it is regarded as a passion. See Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 2. 4. 1380b-1381b.

[58] On the importance of love of God in the Islamic doctrine, particularly in its spiritual experiences, S. H. Nasr remarks that "no understanding of Islamic spirituality is possible without comprehensions of the element of love for God which marks all authentic expressions of this spirituality." See S. H. Nasr (ed.), *Islamic Spirituality* (New York, 1987), p. 321.

[59] In more than 20 verses of the Holy Qurān, God has attributed Himself as the One who loves something or somebody, using the derivations of the word *mahabbah*. There are two verses which contain the Divine attribute of *Wadūd* (lover): surah 11, verse 90 and surah 85, verse 14.

[60] See Kāshānī, MB, vol. 8, p. 4.

[61] al-Amidi, *Tasnif Ghurar al-hikam wa durar al-kalim*, Qum: Maktab al-I'ilm al-Islami, p. 385. See also Kāshānī, MB, vol. 8, p. 11.

[62] See MB, vol. 8, p. 5.

[63] Hadīth Qudsi in *Yanabi' al-Hikmah*.

[64] Kāshānī has narrated this hadīth Qudsi (sacred hadīth) in his *al-Haqā`iq*, p. 368.

[65] See R.A Nicholson, *Mysticism in The Legacy of Islam*, ed. by Sir Thomas Arnold and Alfred Guillaume (London, 1931), pp. 211-212.

[66] *Ibid*.

[67] As a matter of fact Abu Hamid Ghazālī is a very significant figure in this regard. He has remarkably approached the issue of love of God in several of his writings. Using certain methods, Ghazālī has considered the issue in both his ethical and mystical works. I will further discuss Ghazālī's thoughts in my examination of Kāshānī's reflection.

[68] For the importance of Ibn Miskawayh's ethics in the Islamic intellectual history of morality, as well as his moral theory and ethical discipline, see Majid Fakhri, *Ethical Theories in Islam* (New York, 1994), pp. 107-130; "The Platonism of Miskawayh and its Implication for his Ethics," *Studia Islamica*, 42 (1973), pp. 39-57; Dwight M. Donaldson, *Studies in Muslim Ethics* (London, 1953), pp. 121-133; Oliver Leaman, "Ibn Miskawayh," in S. H. Nasr and O. Leaman (eds.), *History of Islamic Philosophy* (New York: 1996), pp. 252-257.

[69] T. J. De Boer, *The History of Philosophy in Islam*, English trans. by Edward R. Jones (New York: Dover Publication Inc., 1967), p. 128.

[70] Its full title is: *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq wa Tathīr al-A`rāq* (The Correction of Dispositions and the Cleansing of Veins). This book has been published several times in Arabic; one version was published in Cairo in the year 1322 A.H. (about 1903 A.D.), and one in Beirut, *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq*, ed. C. Zurayk (Beirut, 1966), trans. by him as *The Refinement Character*, Beirut, 1968. Furthermore, Dwight Donaldson believes that this book is the most important book on philosophical ethics in Muslim literature, and it has been accepted as the authoritative text in

Muslim ethical philosophy. See Dwight M. Donaldson, *Studies in Muslim Ethics* (London, 1953), pp. 122, 127.

[71] See De Boer, *The History of Philosophy in Islam*, p. 128-129.

[72] Fakhri, *Ethical Theories in Islam*, pp. 108-111.

[73] *Ibid*., p. 111.

[74] De Boer, *The History of Philosophy in Islam*, p. 130.

[75] Ibn Miskawayh, *Tahdhīb*, pp. 19-21. See also Donaldson, *Studies in Muslim Ethics*, p. 126.

[76] Here Fakhri has employed both love and friendship, arguing that the two Arabic terms, *sadaqah* and *mahabbah*, are used almost interchangeably. However, he states that Ibn Miskawayh appears to be concerned more with the Aristotelian *philia* than the Platonic *eros*. See Fakhri, *Ethical Theories in Islam*, p. 115, Note 42. I don't agree with the interchangeable usage of the two Arabic terms, *sadaqah* and *mahabbah*. For more clarification in this regard, see the first segment of the current chapter.

[77] In chapter IV of *al-Tahdhīb*, Ibn Miskawayh defines the concept and explains the types of the virtue of justice. In chapter V, he deals with the concept of love and the types of love. See Donaldson, *Studies in Muslim Ethics*, p. 130.

[78] On Plotinus' metaphysics and his approach to the issue of virtue, see the first chapter of this work.

[79] Donaldson, *Studies in Muslim Ethics*, p. 130.

[80] Ibn Miskawayh, *Tahdhīb*, pp. 135-137. See also Donaldson, *Studies in Muslim Ethics*, p. 130, and Fakhri, *Ethical Theories in Islam*, p. 116-117.

[81] De Boer, *The History of Philosophy in Islam*, p. 130.

[82] *Ibid*.

[83] *Ibid*.

[84] *Ibid*.

[85] Here I am using the terminology of Majid Fakhri. He has offered the English term passionate love for the `Arabic `*ishq*, mystical rapture for *walah*, and Divine men for *muta`allihūn*. See Fakhri, *Ethical Theories in Islam*, p. 117.

[86] *Tahdhīb*, p. 139. See also Fakhri, *Ethical Theories in Islam*, p. 117.

[87] *Ibid*. See also Fakhri, *Ethical Theories in Islam*, p. 117.

[88] On Ibn `Arabi's life and thought, see S. H. Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, Delmar (N. Y.: Carvan Books, 1976), Chapter 3; M. Chodkiewicz, *An Ocean Without Shore – Ibn `Arabi, the Book, and the Law*, English trans. by D. Streight, Albany, 1993;

William C. Chittick, "Ibn `Arabi" and "The School of Ibn `Arabi," in S. H. Nasr (ed.), *History of Islamic Philosophy*, part I (New York: 1996), pp. 497-523.

[89] There are certain works that pertain to the position of love within the historical development of Sufism and Mysticism. See, for example, William Chittick, *The Sūfī Path of Love*, Albany: SUNY Press, 1989; Joseph Norment Bell, *Love Theory in Late Hanbalite Islam*, Albany: SUNY Press, 1979; S. H. Nasr, *Sūfī Essays*, Albany: SUNY Press, 1991.

[90] See S. H. Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, Delmar (N. Y.: Carvan Books, 1976), Chapter 3.

[91] See Reynold A. Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam* (London, 1914) p. 102.

[92] Like Ibn `Arabi, many mystic poets, such as Rumi, rely on a symbolic language in the development of the man-God relationship in the context of love theory.

[93] See Reynold A. Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam* (London, 1914) p. 105.

[94] *Ibid*., p. 107.

[95] For instance, see *al-Futūhāt*, vol. II, pp. 427-29, 431, 437, 441, 445, vol. III, p. 155; *Fusūs al-Hikam*, pp. 387-90

[96] See A. E. Affifi, The Mystical Philosophy of Muhyid Din-Ibnul `Arabi (Cambridge, 1939), p. 163.

[97] For a full survey of Ibn `Arabi's mystical thought, as well as his pantheistic system, see S. H. Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages* (Delmar, N. Y.: Carvan Books, 1976), the whole chapter three.

[98] On Ibn `Arabi's doctrine of unity of being, see S. H. Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, pp. 104-108.

[99] See A. E. Affifi, *The Mystical Philosophy of Muhyid Din-Ibnul `Arabi* (Cambridge, 1939), p. 153.

[100] See Abdul Haq Ansari, "The Doctrine of Divine Command: A study in the Development of Ghazālī's View of Reality," *Islamic Studies*, Vol. XXI, No. 3, 1982, pp. 32-36.

[101] S. H. Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, p. 115.

[102] There is a phrase in the Holy Qurān (7:180) confirms that all good names refer to Him (God):

And for Allah are the Beautiful Names وَ لِلّهِ الاسماءُ الحُسنى

[103] There is a narrated tradition says:

Allah (God) is Beautiful, and loves Beauty. اِنَّ اللهَ جَميلٌ يُحِبُّ الجَمالَ

The tradition is narrated by Kāshānī in his *al-Mahajjah al-Baydā'* , vol. 8, p. 12.

[104] A. E. Affifi, *The Mystical Philosophy of Muhyid Din-Ibnul `Arabi* (Cambridge, 1939), p. 173.

[105] There are several meaning for the Arabic term *walāyah* and its related words such as *waliy, awliyā*`, and *tawallā*. Applying this term in the meaning of friendship is the usage highly appreciated by Sufis and Gnostics.

[106] See W. Chittick, "Ibn `Arabi" in S. H. Nasr and O. Leaman (eds.), *History of Islamic Philosophy*, part I (New York: 1996), p. 506.

[107] With this respect S. H. Nasr has precisely discussed Ibn `Arabi's method and language of symbolism in his *Three Muslim Sages*, pp. 102-104.

[108] Reynold A. Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam* (London, 1914), p. 103.

[109] On Tūsī's life and thought, see Hamid Dabashi, "Khwajah Nasir al-Din al-Tūsī: the philosopher/vizier and the intellectual climate of his time," in S. H. Nasr (ed.), *History of Islamic Philosophy*, part I (New York: 1996), pp. 527-584; Majid Fakhri, *Ethical Theories in Islam* (New York, 1994), pp. 131-142; Bakhtyar Husain Siddiqi, "Nasir al-Din Tūsī," in M. M. Sharif (ed.), *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, 2 vol. (Wiesbaden, 1963), pp. 564-580.

[110] On the influence of Ibn Miskawayh and Farabi on Tūsī's ethical doctrine, see Fakhri, *Ethical Theories in Islam*, p. 131; W. Madelung. "Nasir al-Din Tūsī's Ethics Between Philosophy, Shi`ism, and Sufism," in R. G. Hovannisian, ed., *Ethics in Islam* (Malibu, 1985), pp. 85-101.

[111] See Dabashi, "Khwajah Nasir al-Din al-Tūsī ..," p. 558.

[112] Nasir al-Din Tūsī, *The Nasirian Ethics*, English trans. by G. M. Wickens (London: 1964), pp. 195-211.

[113] *Ibid*., p. 195.

[114] *Ibid*., p. 196.

[115] *Ibid.*, p. 196.

[116] On the influence of Ibn Miskawayh on Tūsī in this area, see Fakhri, *Ethical Theories in Islam*, p. 138.

[117] See Majid Fakhri, *Ethical Theories in Islam*, p. 138.

[118] Tūsī, *The Nasirian Ethics*, p. 208.

[119] See Fakhri, *Ethical Theories in Islam*, p. 138.

[120] Tūsī, *The Nasirian Ethics*, pp. 208-209.

[121] *Ibid*., p. 209. It should be noted that, in Islamic tradition, the notion of Wisdom (*hikmat*) is used to manifest the intellectual feature of the Almighty. Tūsī himself,

in the same page, confirms that Almighty God's Wisdom is the most complete of all wisdoms.

[122] *Ibid*., p. 204.

[123] See Dabashi, "Khwajah Nasir al-Din al-Tūsī ..," p. 560. Here, Dabashi is narrating Tūsī's statements from his work, *Akhlāqi Muhtashami*.

[124] Tūsī, *The Nasirian Ethics*, p. 198.

[125] *Ibid.*, p. 204. In the last part of his phrase, Tūsī is referring to a famous verse of the Holy Qurān, *surah* (chapter) 34, *Ayah* (verse) 13.

[126] Fakhri, *Ethical Theories in Islam*, p. 138.

[127] *Ibid.*

[128] Tūsī, *The Nasirian Ethics*, p. 199.

[129] *Ibid.*, p. 208.

[130] *Ibid*.

[131] *Ibid*., p. 210.

[132] G. F. Hourani, "Ethics in Medieval Islam: A Conspectus," in G. F. Hourani (ed.), *Essays on Islamic Philosophy and Science* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1975), p. 134.

[133] Kāshānī, MB, vol. 8, p. 3.

[134] *Ibid*., pp. 8-34.

[135] On Ghazālī, see Mohamed Ahmed Sherif, *Ghazālī's Theory of Virtue* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1975), pp. 145-153.

[136] Kāshānī, MB, vol. 8, pp. 16-27. On Ghazālī's point of view, see Abul Quasem, *The Ethics of al-Ghazālī* (Selangor, Malaysia, 1975), pp. 182-183.

[137] Kāshānī, MB, vol. 8, pp. 3-8. See also his KM, pp. 85-86.

[138] *Ibid*., pp. 9-10.

[139] *Ibid*., vol. 8, p. 11.

[140] *Ibid*, pp. 11-15.

[141] *Ibid*, pp. 16-27.

[142] *Ibid*, pp. 16-24.

[143] *Ibid*, pp. 26-27.

[144] In about 12 pages, Kāshānī has remarkably demonstrated more than eleven signs for the real lover of God. See Kāshānī, MB, vol. 8, pp. 68-79.

[145] MB, vol. 8, pp. 69-71.

[146] *Ibid*, pp. 73-75.

[147] *Ibid*, pp. 75-78. There is a good discussion from Kāshānī himself, regarding the issue of *taqwā* (piety) and its role in human behavior. See his KM, pp. 109-111.

[148] *Ibid*, pp. 43-50.

[149] *Ibid*, pp. 43-44.

[150] On Kāshānī's account of knowledge of God (*ma`rifat Allah*) and its significance in the process of human perfection (*kamāli insāni*), see Kāshānī, MB, vol. 6, pp. 121-124.

[151] *Ibid*, pp. 45-46.

[152] As we have understood from Kāshānī so far, there is a profound relationship between love and knowledge. In Islamic thought and literature, whenever the nature of love is concerned, it is commonly argued that love is either derived from or combined with the *ma`rifah* (knowledge). With this respect, Nasr indicates that, "in the case of Islam, this love (al-mahabbah) is always combined with sapience or gnosis (al-ma`rifah). See S. H. Nasr (ed.), *Islamic Spirituality* (New York, 1987), p. 321.

[153] For more information in this regard, see S. H. Nasr, "The Metaphysics of Sadr al-Din Shirazi and Islamic Philosophy in Qajar Iran, " in E. Bosworth (ed.), *Qajar Iran* (Costa Mesa, California: Mazda Publishers, 1992), pp. 177-198.

[154] The vision of God has been greatly praised in `Irfan (mysticism). Furthermore, gazing upon God's Glorious Face has a deep root in the mystical literature and poetry. The Persian poet Hafiz, for example, says:

این جان عاریت که به حافظ سپرده دوست روزی رخش ببینم و تسلیم وی کنم

(This borrowed life which the Friend hath entrusted to Hafiz / One day I shall see His Face and yield it up to Him). The English translation is Browne's. See E. G. Browne, *Literary History of Persia*, 3:301, n. 3.

[155] Kāshānī, MB, vol. 8, pp. 27-35.

[156] *Ibid.*, pp. 3-101.

[157] *Ibid.*, vol. 7, p. 273; vol. 8, p. 8.

[158] *Ibid.*, vol. 8, pp. 55-63.

[159] The essence of annihilation is that at this stage a lover of God is sometimes so engrossed in the contemplation of his Beloved that he forgets everything except Him; he is even unconscious of himself and his own condition. See Kāshānī, HM, pp. 181-2. See also his KM, pp. 112-114.

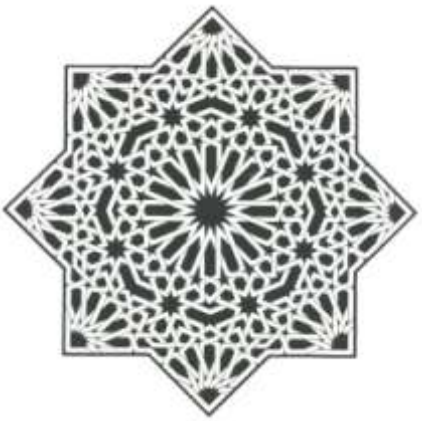
[160] See Kāshānī, HM, p. 171.

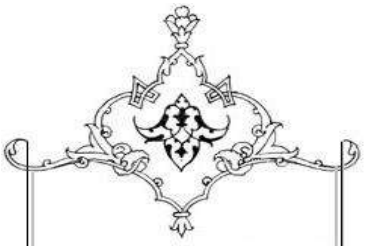
[161] See R.A Nicholson, *Mysticism in The Legacy of Islam,* ed. by Sir Thomas Arnold and Alfred Guillaume (London, 1931), pp. 211-212.

[162] For Shī`ah source, you may refer to Kulayni, *Usūl al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 352.

[163] On the presence of Aristotle's doctrine in Ghazālī's both methodology and theory, see M. A. Sherif, *Ghazālī's Theory of Virtue*, Albany: SUNY Press, 1975. Particularly for the Ghazālī's separation from Aristotle on the issue of love of God, see pp. 145-147.

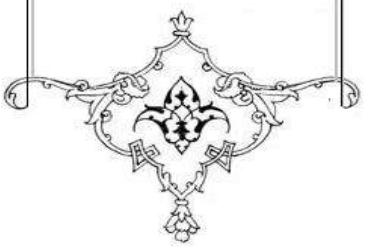
[164] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 8. 7. 1159a 3-4. It seems that for Aristotle, like other philosophers who followed him, love is not categorized as a virtue; it is regarded as a passion. See Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 2. 4. 1380b-1381b.





CHAPTER FIVE

Malebranche and The Virtue of 'Love of God'



CHAPTER 5

Malebranche and The Virtue of 'Love of God'

In this chapter, I will explore Malebranche's perspective of the love of God, as well as some of his achievements. My examination does not expand the vast and widespread ground we may find in Western philosophy and specifically Christian theology, regarding the issue of love, and particularly love of God. I will concentrate my scrutiny on the issue of love of God in its historical development and in the context of Malebranche's moral system.

In this chapter, I will first examine the key concepts of love and God semantically and historically, with a focus on Malebranche's understanding of these concepts. Then, I will briefly survey the historical development of the virtue of love of God in Western and Christian morality. Finally, I will critically scrutinize Malebranche's understanding and interpretation of the virtue of love of God within his moral discipline.

I. Terminology of 'Love' and 'God'

As I have previously mentioned, the linguistic and terminological features of the concepts of love and God seem to be one of the most critical part of our examination here.[1] The concept of love with its related semantic phenomena, is one of those rare concepts in both meaning and application, that is not restricted to one or two aspects of humanity, the universe, or existence.[2] The difficulty

becomes double when we apply the same concept in the transcendental realm of divinity.[3] Thus, these critical features have made love an ambiguous term for some moralists.[4]

In this regard, Knudson says, "the word love is used in all of these different senses, and in the discussion of the Christian principle of love, it is important to bear them in mind. Much confusion has arisen from a failure to distinguish clearly between them."[5] Consequently, as Dreyer rightly states, "No doubt the debate about the meaning of love and its connection to the moral and spiritual life will continue to occupy Christian people, theologians, and Church leaders in the decades ahead."[6]

However, we have to find some logical definition for this term, particularly in Malebranchean context, to be able to approach his theory of love in general, and understand his application of the term in the concept of love of God.

a. The Concept of Love

In the *American Heritage Dictionary*, *love* is defined as "a deep, tender, ineffable feeling of affection and solicitude toward a person, such as that arising from kinship, recognition of attractive qualities, or a sense of underlying oneness. It is also added that *love* is "a feeling of intense desire and attraction toward a person with whom one is disposed to make a pair; the emotion of sex and romance."

For a more general inquiry into the concept of love, it would be better to examine specific discourse which has been developed within the framework of history, in addition to examining theological inquiries.[7]

For instance, in a more comprehensive definition,[8] *love* is described as "an affective disposition toward another person arising from qualities perceived as attractive, from instincts of natural relationship, or from sympathy, and resulting in concern for the

welfare of the object and usually also delight in her/his/its presence and desire for the beloved's acceptance and approval."[9] If we rely on this broad, adequate definition, we may face theological and linguistic difficulties in applying the concept of love to our transcendent theme. Hence, for the sake of our consideration, we may be urged to find certain theological definitions more reliable than others.

The three classical concepts of *eros*, *philia*, and *agape* have regularly taken major roles in conveying the theological account of the meaning of love. Theologians have examined Christian love basically in terms of the hierarchical *eros*/*philia*/*agape* differences.

Eros, signified by Plato in the Symposium as "vulgar" (desiring for earthly, material pleasures) and "heavenly" (desiring for the perfection of love in the world of ideas), comes to be correlated in Christian theology with the lowest form of love; the acquisitive, sensual, passionate, sexual expressions of love. Characterized as selfish and grasping love, this kind of love has almost always carried an irreverent connotation.

Philip Watson, in his preface on Nygren's *Agape and Eros*, explains that these two Greek words are commonly translated as 'love.' However, Watson adds, they are used to represent two quite distinct ideas of love; one of them prevalent in the ancient Hellenistic world where it was called *eros*, and the other characteristic of primitive Christianity to which it was known as *agape*.[10]

Philia refers to a respectful love, such as that between parents and children or the love of friendship. Konstan explains the ancient Greek understanding of *philia* as friendship.[11] He argues that the personal intimacy and affection that we associate with friendship today was also part of the ancient concept. Modern scholars have often argued that the ancient friendship of the Homeric period and also later, was more of an economic or political relationship than a personal one. It was marked more by "obligatory reciprocity" than by "sentiment." The contrary evidence marshaled by Konstan begins with philology.

Konstan suggests the necessity of distinguishing between the Greek words *philos* (friend) and *philia* which usually translated as "friendship," but perhaps more accurately, he says, translated as "loving relationship". *Philia*, on his showing, may have a wide range of meanings, but, within the circle of those with whom one had affectionate relationships, the ancient Greeks were quite ready to designate some as friends in a narrower sense that corresponds more closely to that "abiding image" of friendship we still share with them.[12]

Friendship or love, which is usually assumed to be the English substitute of *philia* in the ancient-Greek framework and particularly in an Aristotelian version, denotes a reasonable relationship between two or more individuals. For Aristotle there are three motives for friendship: usefulness, pleasure and respect for character.[13] This leads some philosophers to deduce that the Aristotelian friendship can presumably be reduced to utility, pleasure or even respect. One may understand from Aristotle that friendship arises 'through' or 'on account of these qualities and some times reduced to them.

However, as Konstan explains, the entire structure of Aristotle's ethic is built upon the desire for *eudaimonia,* or happiness. Such ethic of self–realization creates grave difficulty in placing the good of the loved one at the center of one's concern.[14] In books VIII and IX, in his discussion of friendship, Aristotle attempts to do just that and thereby moves beyond the confines of self–realization. Whether he really manages it or not, Konstan is quite optimistic.

Konstan argues that Aristotle does not seek to derive *philia* from self–love.[15] Certainly, the relevant passages are puzzling, but there are moments when Aristotle's argument does not seem to transcend the individual's quest for personal happiness, rather the individuals' quest is served by the friend. *Agape* is considered as the noblest kind of love and a unique principle of Christian theology and ethics. In the classical language of Christianity, charity basically represents this kind of Divine love. Therefore, *Agapic* love or charity is associated with God's love. According to this consideration, human

love is *agapic* only to the extent that it indicates the Divine, *agapic* love. As the highest level of human love, *agapic* love is a benevolent, gracious and self sacrificing form of love.[16] Based on the above consideration, the relationship between *eros* and *agape* has often been one of conflict, tension and mutual exclusivity. It is adequately accepted that unlike erotic love, which is said to be elicited by the attractive qualities of the loved object, *agapic* love is perceived as pure and selfless, a love that loves even enemies and objects or persons that are repulsive to the beholder. To distinguish one application from another, it is declared that the true Christian love or *agape* is a purely giving love that has no desire or craving; and in this respect, is sharply distinguished from and indeed opposed to *eros* or love as conceived by Plato and by Greek philosophy in general.[17]

However, in a tabular survey, Nygren has demonstrated his account of the two fundamental motifs, i.e. *eros* and *agape*, and their contrary tendencies.[18]

Agape is sacrificial giving.	Eros is acquisitive desire and longing
Agape comes down.	Eros is an upward movement.
Agape is God's way to man.	Eros is man's way to God.
Agape is God's grace: salvation is the work of Divine love.	Eros is man's effort: it assumes that man's salvation is his own work.
Agape is unselfish love, it "seeketh not its own," it gives itself away.	Eros is egocentric love, a form of self-assertion of the highest, noblest, sublimest kind.
Agape lives the life of God, therefore dares to "lose it."	Eros seeks to gain its life, a life Divine, immortalised.
Agape is freedom in giving, which depends on wealth and plenty.	Eros is the will to get and possess which depends on want and need.
Agape is primarily God's love; God is Agape. Even when it is attributed to man, Agape is patterned on Divine love.	Eros is primarily man's love; God is the object of Eros. Even when it is attributed to God, Eros is patterned on human love.
Agape is sovereign in relation to its object, and is directed to both "the evil and the good;" it is spontaneous, overflowing," "unmotivated."	Eros is determined by the quality, the beauty and worth, of its object; it is not spontaneous, but "evoked," "motivated."
Agape loves – and creates value in its object.	Eros recognizes value in its object – and loves it.

In specifying a definition for *love*, Aquinas examines "four words referring in a way, to the same thing: *love*, *dilection*, *charity*, and *friendship*." Aquinas demonstrates that "they differ, however, in this, that *friendship*, according to the Philosopher (*Ethic*, viii. 5), is like a habit, whereas *love* and *dilection* are expressed by way of act or passion; and *charity* can be taken either way."[19] For Aquinas *love* has a wider signification than the others for two reasons. First, every *dilection* or *charity* is *love*, but not vice versa; and second, the object of love is more general than the object of others. On the other hand, Aquinas gives the credit to *charity* when he says, "Charity denotes, in addition to love, a certain perfection of love, in so far as that which is loved is held to be of great price, as the word itself implies."[20] It seems that Aquinas's examination of charity here is essentially influenced by his traditional background, which is recognized by biblical terminology. Thus, *charity*, in the language of Scripture, is identified as a higher level of love.

Regarding the cause and object of love, Aquinas argues that since the proper object of love is good, that good is the proper cause of love. To define good, Aquinas asserts that *good* means that which simply pleases the appetite.[21] Then he extends the domain of *good* as the cause and object of love, adjoining *beauty* to it. He says that the *beautiful* is the same as the *good*, regarding its causation and objectivity, and they differ in aspect only.

Furthermore, for Aquinas knowledge plays a significant role in the process of love since it is also the cause of love. Aquinas explains that "knowledge is the cause of love for the same reason as good is, which can be loved only if known."[22] Even natural love, Aquinas continues, which is in all things, is caused by a kind of knowledge, not indeed existing in natural things themselves, but in Him who created their nature.[23] In the following historical section, we pay closer attention to Aquinas' opinion regarding God's love.

In his first classification of love, Aquinas categorizes love as a *natural love*, *sensitive love*, and *intellectual love*. First he illustrates

that love differs according to the differences of appetites. On natural love, Aquinas demonstrates that in the natural appetite, the principle of moving toward the object of love is the appetitive subject's connaturalness with the thing to which it is inclined. In like manner, Aquinas argues for the other type of love, the aptitude of the sensitive appetite or of the will to some good, that is to say, its very complacency in good, is called sensitive love, or intellectual love or rational love.[24] Therefore, sensitive love is in the sensitive appetite, and intellectual love is in the intellectual appetite. For Aquinas, natural love not only exists within the powers of the vegetal soul, but also in all the soul's powers, all parts of the body, and universally in all things.[25] By this assertion, Aquinas confirms a universal love which flows in all parts of the creature, and emanates from the main source of love, that is God.

In another classification, Aquinas divided love into two different types: sensitive love and spiritual love. Confirming the role of knowledge in any kind of love, he follows the philosopher's reasoning and argues that "bodily sight is the beginning of sensitive love; and in like manner the contemplation of spiritual beauty or goodness is the beginning of spiritual love."[26] Here, Aquinas uses the same terminology and causality for both diametric types of love, namely physical and spiritual love.

Keeping in mind the above-mentioned historical development of the concept of love, we will now focus on Malebranche's examination of the issue. With respect to the nature of love and its relation to the soul,[27] Malebranche maintains that love is a kind of passion the soul sees within itself without using any idea. He defines love within his psychological context as a sensation and passion of the Soul that represents nothing External.[28] As we discern from his metaphysical approach to the issues such as love, hate, joy, Malebranche clearly specifies that these feelings are within us, caused by an internal causality and not an external efficacy.

To determine the nature of love, Malebranche develops it within the context of human freedom and will. Malebranche maintains that man's natural inclinations lead him toward the universal good, i.e. God. In this process, the soul comprehends its tendency toward any particular good while it compares a number of competing goods and discovers the one in which the universal good is most completely realized.[29]

Then Malebranche links man's freedom, or we may say *will*'s decision, to the theory of love. He argues that the active identification of the soul with an object that pleases it, and in which it realizes the greatest good and therefore the greatest happiness, is recognized as *love*. Hence, for Malebranche, the two kinds of objects for love are the universal good (God) and particular goods.

Malebranche argues that we love God voluntarily and freely, because we naturally seek the greatest good, and our happiness lies in seeking the greatest good.[30] We also love the particular goods freely but not voluntarily. We choose the possible good which propels us the furthest towards the universal good which is the goal of all our natural endeavors.

In one classification, Malebranche differentiated love into three kinds:

(1) Love-as-union, which means loving something as willing to be at one with it; a love which belongs to God and only God as the One from whom we came and with whom lies our lasting good.

(2) Love-as-friendliness or respect, refers to wishing the other well for the other's own sake.

(3) Love-as-esteem, refers to loving something or someone insofar as one estimates that object to possess a particular quality or trait.[31]

Malebranche then explains how human soul recognizes the nature of love; "it is certain that the soul sees within itself, and without Idea's, all the sensations and passions it is capable of, as pleasure, pain, cold, heat, colours, sounds, odours, sapors, its love, its hatred, joy and sadness, etc. because all the sensations and passions of the soul represent nothing external which is like them; and because they are only modifications, which nothing but the mind is capable of."[32]

He applies the same metaphysical mechanism to love as he did to knowledge (see chapter 3):

> So that we may say, that unless we do see God in some measure, we should see nothing: In like manner, unless we do Love God, I mean, unless God did continually Imprint in us the Love of Good in general, we should Love nothing. For that Love being our Will, we can Love nothing, nor Will anything without him; since we cannot Love particular Goods, without determining towards those Goods, the motion of Love, which God gives us towards him.[33]

Here, Malebranche regards the divine love to be the origination of all kinds of love and the divinity, the only cause for the formation of any kind of love to the extent that our motion towards good, which is the nature of love, has been created by God. This affirmation correlates within his metaphysical elaboration on causality, as we have already seen in the third chapter.

My concern here is his understanding of human will, which he seems to identify love. He maintains that God is the one who continually imprints in us the Love of Good. Therefore, according to Malebranche the tendency towards good comes from the Divine side and not the human will. We will further consider Malebranche's understanding of the process of love of God in our forthcoming discussion.

b. The Notion of God

We are now in a position to consider Malebranche's understanding and exposition of the concept of God. With respect to the issue of God, Malebranche maintains that "God is all Beings, because He is Infinite and Comprehends all; but He is no Being in particular."[34] Malebranche believes that "There is then but one only true God, and He is the one only true Cause."[35] As we have already seen, for Malebranche God is not only the creator of the world and of man but also the cause of every single action and movement which occurs in the universe. Based on his metaphysical cosmology, God is the real cause of all human activities, including man's feelings and intellectual reflections.

Malebranche, like many theologians, considers the nature of the relationship between God and the world as the most serious of theological-cosmological concerns. Malebranche indicates that there is no relation between God and the world, between infinity and finitude.[36] However, to save his metaphysical consideration, as well as to find a reasonable solution for the upcoming critical questions, he seeks a Christocentric observation within his Divine-centered cosmological doctrine to challenge the dilemma in a systematic fashion.

Malebranche summarizes his metaphysical account of God's relationship to the world in the following principles: "Let us therefore keep to this Opinion, That God is the Intelligible World, or the place of Spirits, as the material World is the place of Bodies. That they receive all their Modifications from his Power; That they find all their Ideas in his wisdom; And that it is by his Love that they are acted in all their regular Motions; and since his Power and Love are nothing but himself, let us believe with St. Paul, that he is not far from every one of us; and that it is in him we have Life, Motion, and a Being."[37] This theological intuition composes the bedrock of not only Malebranche's account of God-world relationship, but also his whole metaphysical and epistemological system. Jolley considers this a systematic attempt

to do justice to the intuition that Malebranche argues for; that of the total dependence of creatures on the Creator in all their operations.[38]

It is also interesting here to see the way which Malebranche explores the man's knowledge of God. First of all, he maintains that we know God without mediation, but rather in an immediate and direct view, and that He is the only being we know in this way. So we have such an original, true but very limited knowledge of God.[39] However, our knowledge of God does not extend to His essence or absolute being. What we see is always a particular; but God does not exist in this manner because He is the whole, and includes within Himself all particulars without being one of them.[40]

In summary, the concept of love with all its ambiguity and complexity has been adequately understood and defined by Malebranche to be employed as a virtue in his moral discipline. With respect to the issue of God, Malebranche doesn't see any difficulty in absorbing the traditional concept of God within his metaphysical observation.

II. Love of God in Christian History

Christian morality has made a remarkable scholarly contribution to the development of the Western ethical discipline which stems from Greek and particularly Aristotelian orientation. In return, we may find a deep influence on Christian ethics by Aristotelian ethics. However, as we saw in the first chapter, there are some ethical themes that are evidently absent from the Aristotelian *Nicomachean Ethics*. The virtue of love of God, its nature and types, its place in morality, and its relationship with the ultimate end and human perfection are some of those issues that we may not find in details in Aristotle's morality. Aristotle not only dismissed the issue of love of God as a moral virtue in his system, but also rejects any possibility of love of God. Aristotle affirms that there can be no love

between man and God because the distance between them is too great.[41]

Although we may find the Aristotelian elaboration of the theory of love in his effort in the discussion of *philia*, love or friendship,[42] the language of Aristotelian friendship was not eminently appreciated by the early Christian thinkers.[43]

As Konstan observes, many Christian writers, especially after the fourth century, avoided the language of friendship altogether, perhaps because the classical notion of friendship which required a mutual awareness of virtue seemed incompatible with Christian humility and the sense that all of one's virtue was ultimately the fruits of God's grace. Even Christian thinkers who did use the language of friendship, more often turned to the language of brotherhood, "preferring to represent themselves as brothers united in Christ by virtue of their faith rather than claim the name of friend on the basis of their own excellence."[44]

Yet, a good number of Christian thinkers from both theological and philosophical disciplines have made numerous efforts to illustrate and develop the doctrine of love of God, and utilize it within the whole moral system. Although Christian theologians often hold Christianity to be the religion of love, in some form the concept itself holds a crucial position in most other world religions. However, the principle of love comes first in the Christian moral ideal, hence the Christian ethic is frequently declared an ethic of love.[45] The most important and primary argumentations behind this statement seems to be the Biblical support that this idea receives through the text itself.

In the New Testament, love appears as a primary theme, encapsulating the whole content of the Christian faith. The term *eros* does not appear in the New Testament, but *philia* is used to refer to various types of love; basically that between persons who are closely connected by blood or faith. *Agape* indicates in nearly every case God's love for the human being or the love of the human being for God.

Furthermore, *agape* characterizes God's purpose for creation and God's action in the world. It is also employed as a biblical pattern for the God-man relationship, which is achievable through a Divine love. The Biblical language also ascribes love for the neighbor, friend and enemy as *agape* (Rom 5:5). It seems that the main reason for gathering the latter under the umbrella of *agape* is the fact that this kind of love is both derived from the Divine love and commanded by God.

According to the Bible, the greatest commandment of God is the love of God. In response to a question by a scribe regarding the most important commandment, Jesus answers: "Hear O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength" (Mark 12:30). The second, or the continuation of the commandment is as follows: "And the second like it, is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these."[46] Furthermore, we understand from the tradition that love is a duty as well, when it combines with a kind of fear. In fact, it is man's *only* duty: "Fear [venerate/love] God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man" (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

Christian tradition teaches us that man's love towards God has its origination within God's love. The God's love that we understand from the Bible is a unique and specific one. The Bible tells us that God is love (I John 4:8). Throughout the Bible, this Divine love has been characterized as great (Ephesians 2:4), infinite (Ephesians 3:18,19), eternal (Jeremiah 31:3; Ephesians 1:4,5), and dependable (Romans 8:35). To understand this love, we must realize that God's love for mankind is a distinctive kind of love that the New Testament calls *agape*. Agape has been biblically introduced by the theologians as well as commentators as a Divine, universal, unconditional and everlasting love. The New Testament says: "The Lord appeared to in the past, saying; 'I have loved you with an everlasting love'" (John 31:3). This Divine love stems from the Divine realm and flows towards the world

and the human beings. Furthermore, the Bible and theology affirm that man's love toward God is just a response to His love towards man. We read in the Bible: "We love because He first loved us" (I John 4:19).

The Bible regards following of the Divine commandments as a crucial result of mans love towards God. New Testament states: "Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me" (John 14:21). Even Jesus declares that obeying his teaching would be a sign of love for him: "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching" (John 14:23).

In the New Testament, perfection is grounded in the nature of God who is perfect, and therefore man ought to be perfect. Since the *goal of moral perfection* is always in the supernatural order, the love of God is called "the greatest and the first commandment" (Matt., xxii, 38), "the end of the commandment" (1 Tim., i, 5), "the bond of perfection" (Col., iii, 14). God is also love; therefore man ought to be loving in thought and deed.[47] A phrase from John's First Letter declares: "God is love" (I Jn 4:8). Furthermore, God is the source, the way, and the fullness of love. Consequently, God is the norm and ground for moral excellence as well as the human perfection. The Christian tradition conveys that in order to be like God and have fellowship with Him, one must share in His perfection. Hence, one of the most characteristic features of Christian ethic is the quest of the perfect life.[48]

Christian love posses its distinctive qualities.[49] Besides the meanings of love that were inherited from the Hebrew culture and Hellenism, Christian love points specifically to the love of God revealed in Jesus Christ who entered history and died out of love for creation. Throughout the history of Christianity, love has been a cornerstone of the discourse on the spiritual life.

For Paul, *agape* refers to the love of God, in which God's election is made manifest in Jesus Christ's saving work (Rom 5:8). All God's activities as well as the rule for human behavior are described in

the song of love in 1 Corinthians 13: "Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, [love] is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things" (13:4 7). God's love, which is forgiving, compassionate, and ultimately victorious over death, is sealed in its crowning act with the resurrection (see 2 Cor 5:19ff).

Christianity has a specific motivation for the virtue of love. In Christianity, love and God; or good and God are not considered as distinct concepts. Rather Christianity asserts that God is love; that created love was made in His image; and He is the unacknowledged Ground on whom our judgments of "good enough" depend.[50]

Furthermore, heaven is defined not as the reward for the love of God that is distinct from Him, but rather as the fullness of God Himself; neither hell is the punishment for rejecting Him, but simply His absence. Thus both punishment and reward resolve into what one really sought throughout life. God respects our choices.

This is one of the reasons Dante says that even hell was made by love.[51] Historically, the issue of love, in general, and love of God, in particular, has received a very demonstrative and astounding speculation among Western philosophers and Christian theologians, particularly in the domain of Mystical ideology, as well as moral theology. In my historical approach here, because of the limited extent of this research, I would prefer to concentrate on some Western Christian figures who have on the one hand directly and extensively contemplated the issue of love of God in their system, and on the other hand held certain influential roles in Malebranche's moral elaboration.

From the numerous philosophers, theologians, moralists and mystics, I would like to more precisely consider the reflections of three Western thinkers from three different horizons: Plotinus, a well known Neo-Platonist, Saint Augustine, a renowned traditionalist and Saint

Thomas Aquinas, a famous theologian. I selected these three figures, who represent different intellectual domains and approach the issue through various methodological means, as the historical models who illustrate the background of Malebranche's thought.

Moreover, as we will see, their methods and terminology have been highly appreciated and in some cases developed by Malebranche himself. Therefore, consideration of their thoughts would presumably constitute the main part of our study of Malebranche's discipline.

Plotinus (205-270), who was the founder of Neo-Platonism,[52] played an influential role in both Christian and Islamic thoughts. In the previous chapter, we examined some of his mystical influences on the development of Islamic thought, and particularly within the Gnostic domain. In this chapter, we will shed more light on his account of love and love of God.

We have already seen in the first chapter that for Plotinus the One is distinguished as the core principle of the whole Being. Using a metaphorical language, he designs hierarchical levels within the One Being which includes God, the world and the human being. To accomplish its ultimate end and final perfection, the human soul should ascend through this existential chain.

However, mounting toward the first principle, namely the One, is just the first step in the hierarchical movement of human soul. The ultimate goal, according to Plotinus, is to become Godlike. Hence, Plotinus affirms that attaining likeness to the One by unifying with Him is the final end for humanity, when he says, "we have to fix our gaze above the image and attain Likeness to the Supreme Exemplar."[53] To achieve this likeness and unity, love plays a very profound role. In the position of this unification, the soul is able, by and through love, to have a vision on the pure Beauty.[54]

In the very beginning of his Tractate on love, Plotinus raises questions about the nature of love, indicates that it requires a review from the philosophical perspective and praises Plato's approach in this

regard.[55] To define love, Plotinus employs certain metaphorical terminology, to adopt the very theory of love within his mystical observation. First, he illustrates that love is a medium between the desire and the object. He illustrates this through an example: "Love, thus, is ever intent upon that other loveliness, and exists to be the medium between desire and that object of desire. It is the eye of the desirer; by its power what loves is enabled to see the loved thing. But it is first; before it becomes the vehicle of vision, it is itself filled with the sight; it is first, therefore, and not even in the same order– for desire attains to vision only through the efficacy of Love, while Love, in its own Act, harvests the spectacle of beauty playing immediately above it."[56]

Then Plotinus argues for the eternity of love's existence. He explains that since the soul, which exists eternally in the eyes of Plotinus, deserves love when it has a tendency towards the Good, so will love exist as long as the soul exists. "And Love has of necessity been eternally in existence, for it springs from the intention of the Soul towards its Best, towards the Good; as long as Soul has been, Love has been."[57]

Nevertheless, Plotinus confirms that "still this Love is of mixed quality. On the one hand there is in it the lack which keeps it craving: on the other, it is not entirely destitute; the deficient seeks more of what it has, and certainly nothing absolutely void of good would ever go seeking the good."[58] In the mystical terminology of Plotinus Good and Beauty as the two powerful elements that attract the soul, are identified to be the Divine realm. For Plotinus, the soul's tendency towards pure beauty, fabricates the nature of love:

> It is sound, I think, to find the primal source of Love in a tendency of the Soul towards pure beauty, in a recognition, in a kinship, in an unreasoned consciousness of friendly relation.[59]

However, Platinus clarifies that "the very ambition towards the good is a sign of existing indetermination."[60] Thus, the human soul, on the wing of love, should elevate itself towards the higher perfection. This mystical observation designs Plotinus' examination of the ultimate end and human perfection. Plotinus maintains that "Pure Love seeks the beauty alone."[61] Plotinus characterizes the Divine Being or the One, as Pure Love.[62] He also believes in a universal soul that demands a universal love. Every soul, in its developmental elevation, depends on the power of love, which has its source in the Pure Love, and advances them toward the One who is the Pure Beauty and Good. He then reasons that "as the All–Soul (Universal Soul) contains the Universal Love, so must the single soul be allowed its own single love."[63] Accordingly, every human soul deserves its share of love through which it is accomplished to fulfill the process of achieving the Beauty and the eternal life. In the terminology of Plotinus, this love is the leader of particular Souls to the Good.[64]

Plotinus accepts two kinds of beauty, i.e. earthly beauty and Divine beauty, and believes that the human soul can realize either one. He argues that those who "desire earthly procreation are satisfied with the beauty found on earth, the beauty of image and of body."

According to Plotinus they are seeking earthly beauty because they are strangers to the real beauty and therefore take earthly images as real. Nevertheless, Plotinus continues, "there are Souls to whom earthly beauty is a leading to the memory of that in the higher realm and these love the earthly as an image; those that have not attained to this memory do not understand what is happening within them, and take the image for the reality."[65] Thus, this group of souls has learned to move towards eternity by seeking beauty, and thereby achieving immortality.

Saint Augustine (354-430), is one of the exceptional, prominent classic theologians who dedicated his entire system to the unique, transcendental issue of love of God.[66] Indeed, as Glenn Tinder

remarks, the main principle of Augustine's whole vision of life and history was the love of God.[67]

Augustine's image of the two cities was also developed on the basis of love; the earthly city built by self-love and the heavenly city created by love of God, which sealed one's membership in either the city of God or the city of man.[68]

This theological as well as moral and political imagination, which has been painted in stark opposition, preoccupied moral theology for centuries.[69] However, the influence of neo-Platonism on the cosmology and morality of Augustine should not be overlooked.[70] We will later see some neo-Platonic elements in his moral observations, and particularly in his examination of love of God and its related features.[71]

Augustine maintains that all human love is acquisitive; a quest for happiness, some good, and/or some *bonum*.[72] For Augustine, the object of love determines the validity of the given love applied by man. All men seek the good since it is the universal motive of human action; but there is a perpetual difference between the goods that men seek. Augustine argues that we become like that which we seek or love. If we love the highest good or God, we become like Him; if we love the lower good, or the world, we become like it.

Thus, for Augustine, there are two kinds of love: the love of God, *caritas*, and the love of the world, *cupiditas*.[73] He insists that the only right love is *caritas* or love of God and that only God, as the Supreme Good, must be loved purely for its own sake.[74]

However, Augustine declares that to love God rightly is to fulfill every passion. Thus, love of God for Augustine has a dual purpose: on the one hand, it determines man's relation to the only reality that is the Absolute Being, and on the other hand, it settles the human relation to the multitudinous realities that are finite and corruptible.[75]

On the origination of the process of love, Augustine presents his argumentation in a transcendent framework which seems to have been influenced by a neo-Platonic orientation.[76] According to Augustine, salvation consists of the ascent to God; but man merits his own salvation. It is the Divine grace or love, that is the source of salvation. Since this love or grace is wholly an act of the Divine will, one may regard his own salvation as Divinely predestined.[77] Through the doctrine of predestination, the man's complete dependence on God is ontologically justified within the Augustinian theological discipline. Hence, love and grace, in the eyes of Augustine, are the means of fulfilling the process of salvation.

In the Augustinian doctrine of love, man's love for God is basically derived from the God's love for man. The latter love itself originates from Divine love, i.e. God's own love. Augustine's interpretation of God's love as a self-love or the love towards Himself and nothing else has been understood within his theological framework. Augustine presents two argumentations to support this idea. He explains that since God is absolute and self-sufficient, He has no unsatisfied desire, and craves nothing outside of Himself. He finds His satisfaction and enjoyment in the perfection of His own being. In this sense, He is Love. In another interpretation, Augustine argues that He is love also in the sense that He is the object of all *caritas*, or heavenward love. All true love is directed toward Him. Thus, as the object of both His own love and that of others, He is identified with love.[78] Both loves, namely God's love to man and man's love to God, are the essential elements in the Christian doctrine of love. Believing in this transcendental relationship between the two loves helped Augustine mark his ethic as an ethic of pure grace. Thus, based on this doctrine, the Divine love is a means toward an end.

We may understand Augustine's Ethics as a system in which the person's relationship with God determines whether an action is good or bad. Actually, it would not be exaggeration to say that Augustine has theorized an Ethic of love. According to him, if an

action is done for the sake of loving God, then it is good. It is not good if done for any other reason. Loving God is the primary consideration for a moral life. One should act not out of the fear of eternal condemnation but out of the love of God. It seems that the God-man relationship is one of the most important principles which characterize the Augustine's ethical discipline.[79]

In another examination of love, which deserves a different metaphorical language, Augustine describes love as the hand of the soul, "Consider a man's love: think of it as, so to say, the hand of the soul. If it is holding anything, it cannot hold anything else. But that it may be able to hold what is given to it, it must leave go what it holds already. This I say, see how expressly I say it; "Whoever loves the world cannot love God; he has his hand engaged." God says to him, "Hold what I give." He will not leave go what he was holding; he cannot receive what is offered."[80]

Augustine sees a conflict between the love of God and the love of world. The metaphor, "Love is the hand of the soul, if it is holding anything, it cannot hold anything else," echoes what we heard from Plotinus. I am not sure whether Augustine refers to Plotinus here, but we notice the same tone, and consequently engage in the same moral conclusion. In his Confessions, Augustine again raises the conflict between the loves toward different objects, and asks for continence and justice. He says:

> You [God] have commanded upon us not only continence, that is, to withhold [*cohibeamus*] our love from certain things, but also justice, that is, whereon we are to bestow [*conferamus*] our love."[81]

He understands and interprets the biblical statement in the above mentioned context when he says:

> For when [Jesus] said, "With your whole heart, and with your whole soul, and with your whole mind," He did not

> leave any part of life which should be free and find itself room to desire the enjoyment of something else. But whatever else appeals to the mind as being lovable should be directed [*rapiatur*] into that channel into which the whole current of love flows.[82]

For Augustine, God is the highest good and the good of all good, and man in his journey towards the eternal life should hold onto the blessing of clinging to God. To achieve this eternal life, which is the supreme good, man has to live rightly.

> That is why the scripture says, "The just man lives on the basis of faith." For we do not yet see our good, and hence we have to seek it by believing; and it is not in our power to live rightly, unless while we believe and pray we receive help from him who has given us the faith to believe that we must be helped by him.[83]

Based on this doctrine, Augustine has apparently determined the role of love of God in both human moral life and his path to the eternal life. Acknowledging God as the supreme good, man loves Him and clings to Him. However, God must be loved in such a way that, if at all possible, we would forget ourselves.[84] This love will have certain impact in man's moral life: first, he will be able to love himself, "for if I do not abide in Him, neither will I be able to abide in myself."[85] Secondly, it shapes the moral virtues on which man depends in his worldly life.[86] And finally, it relieves him to develop towards his final destiny and eternal life.

Finally, the process of happiness and fulfillment of the ultimate end, according to Augustine, relies on the desire of love, or better to say on love as desire. He argues that the good from which man is deprived and which he therefore desires is life without death or loss. God as the object of love (or desire) is but the manifestation of this good.[87] For Augustine Love as desire looks to eternity for its

fulfillment. Hence, the fulfillment and end of desire is enjoyment (*frui*). This is the goal, Augustine continues, toward which love aims and which constitutes happiness.[88]

To explain the process of reaching the ultimate end and achieving happiness (*eudaimonia*), Augustine relies on his God centered cosmological doctrine. Within this theological framework, Augustine argues that "in order to be able to attain happiness man should live as God lives. To attain this, "our mind should not be self-contented but should be subjected to God."[89]

Kent demonstrates how Augustine adjusts the idea of God as the Supreme Good, with the idea of happiness (*eudaimonia*) as the supreme good; "Augustine himself sees no serious conflict between declaring happiness our supreme good and declaring God our supreme good."[90] Kent argues on behalf of Augustine that there is no conflict because love itself works to overcome the distinction.

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), as the most influential figure in the history of Christian theology, has critically reviewed the nature of love in his *Summa Theologica*. In Prima (Part one), for instance, when he attributes love to God, Aquinas recognizes two fundamental elements; namely the tendency towards good[91] and the unification with the good, as the major characteristics of the nature of love.

> An act of love always tends towards two things; to the good that one wills, and to the person for whom one wills it: since to love a person is to wish that person good. Hence, inasmuch as we love ourselves, we wish ourselves good; and, so far as possible, union with that good. So love is called the unitive force, even in God, yet without implying composition; for the good that He wills for Himself, is no other than Himself.[92]

Elsewhere, Aquinas talks more about union and regards it as the result of love.[93] He argues that the lover stands before that which

he loves as though it were himself or part of himself. He expounds as follows, "the union of lover and beloved is twofold. The first is real union, for instance when the beloved is present with lover. The second is the union of affection, and this union must be considered in relation to the preceding apprehension; since movement of the appetite follows apprehension. Now love being twofold: love of concupiscence, and love of friendship."[94]

To find a reasonable way to attribute love to God, Aquinas, first identifies two different kinds of love, material or imperfect and immaterial or perfect. He maintains that the love attributed to God cannot be material and imperfect, but acknowledges that he has no difficulty in attributing material and imperfect love to God metaphorically. "Since therefore none of these (love and joy) can be attributed to God on their material side, as has been said (ad 1); neither can those that even on their formal side imply imperfection be attributed to Him; except metaphorically, and from likeness of effects."[95]

For Aquinas, "love is a binding force, since it aggregates another to ourselves, and refers his good to our own." He considers this characteristic applicable to the love we attribute to God. Aquinas confirms that "the Divine love is a binding force, inasmuch as God wills good to others; yet it implies no composition in God."[96]

Aquinas asserts that knowledge is a prerequisite to love. In order to love, we must have knowledge of what is really good. He clearly specifies this, "Since to love God is something greater than to know Him, especially in this state of life, it follows that love of God presupposes knowledge of God. And because this knowledge does not rest in creatures, but, through them, tends to something else, love begins there, and thence goes on to other things by a circular movement so to speak; for knowledge begins from creatures, tends to God, and love begins with God as the last end, and passes on to creatures."[97]

Therefore, love and knowledge must be fundamentally united. Knowledge cannot act without love and love cannot know what is really good without knowledge.[98] Ultimately, knowledge (*Sophia)* and love (*phronesis)* share the same Source and Destiny. In its quest for truth Knowledge will at last reach the ultimate Truth that is God. In its pursuit of good Love will finally arrive at the Infinite Good that is God. God is the pure actualization of truth and good, that is Being Himself.[99]

Love and knowledge are thus inextricably bound together in man's very nature; and if we live according to our nature, they will lead us straight to our Source and Ultimate End. This union is achieved through a life lived in the cultivation of virtue, and God's perfect love for us that constantly pulls us toward Him. If we do not follow this natural path of love and knowledge, we will only find emptiness and despair since our nature will never be fulfilled.[100]

It is noteworthy that for Aquinas, the only criteria that distinguishes absolute or infused virtues from acquired virtues is the potential to promote man towards his ultimate end. He explains that,

> Only infused virtues are complete and deserved to be called virtues absolutely, since they direct a human being to the absolutely ultimate end. Other virtues, those acquired, are such in a limited sense and not without qualification. They direct a person in a particular area.[101]

Aquinas applies this doctrine to the virtue of charity by stating that charity, inasmuch as it directs man to his ultimate end, is the principle of all the good works that are referable to man’s ultimate end. Wherefore all the moral virtues must be infused with charity, since it is through moral virtues man performs each different kind of good work.[102] He argues that since charity is a special kind of love, it is also a special virtue. His entire argumentation is as follows:

> Now the proper object of love is the good, as stated above (I-II, 27, 1), so that wherever there is a special aspect of good, there is a special kind of love. But the Divine good, inasmuch as it is the object of happiness, has a special aspect of good, wherefore the love of charity, which is the love of that good, is a special kind of love. Therefore charity is a special virtue.[103]

The virtue of charity, which is identified with the virtue of love of God, plays a major role in the formation of Aquinas' moral doctrine. First, he insists that "charity is included in the definition of every virtue, not as being essentially every virtue, but because every virtue depends on it in a way."[104] Then he confirms the unique role of charity in the achievement of the ultimate goal. Aquinas states, "the ultimate and principal good of man is the enjoyment of God, according to Ps. 72:28: "It is good for me to adhere to God," and to this good man is ordered by charity.[105]

At this juncture, let us briefly reflect on how Aquinas explains that the love of God directs man towards his perfection by its essence. He argues that love denotes a certain adaptation of the appetitive power to some good. If a thing adapts to that which is suitable for it, then love of that suitable good perfects and betters the lover. Accordingly, when man loves God, he adapts to a most suitable goodness that is God. Thus, Aquinas concludes that "man is perfected and bettered chiefly by the love of God."[106]

Finally, word on Aquinas, with respect to God's love toward his creatures, Aquinas confirms that love has fundamentally formulated the God-world relationship. He first acknowledges the perfection of God's knowledge. Then, Aquinas argues that God's knowledge is absolutely perfect since He knows Himself and all things that are appointed by Him. Since every knowing being strives toward the end, then will is indicated in knowing. God knows Himself as the Perfect Good, He wills Himself as the End. Since everything is willed

by God, Aquinas continues, then everything is brought by the Divine Will to Himself in the relation of means to the end. God wills good for every being which exists; that is He loves it, and therefore, love is the fundamental relation of God to the world.[107]

Before we go further and examine Malebranche's doctrine, let us review the discussion so far. The issue of love of God cannot be profoundly and deeply considered without examining the historical development of the Greek period and the classic ages. Apparently, one cannot rationalize and evaluate the virtue of love of God apart from its historical development, because its theological and mystical origins have been profoundly influenced throughout history.

I have elected a historical approach to promote my understanding because it reveals the connection between historical intelligibility and logical relationships. To understand the virtue of love of God, I evaluated the problems that were posed by the philosophical, mystical, and theological predecessors of the theory as well as the historical limitations which were imposed upon the possible solutions. Furthermore, to analyze concepts in terms of a historical sequence may be useful for another reason. In abstracting certain characteristics of the sequence, and thus lending it an ideal character, we acquire a method for noting similar sequences embedded in quite different historical processes. This method may help us in our analysis of the results and limitations in applying the theory in different historical communities with similar rules and norms.

Finally, this strong and efficacious background which is a synthesis of traditional, rational and mystical observations of the critical issue of love of God, has basically facilitated a scholarly foundation for any further attempts in this regard. Malebranche's examination, as I understand, is one such attempt that has been theoretically and methodologically carved upon and developed through this profound heritage.

III. Love of God as a Virtue in Malebranche's Ethics

I would like to begin this section of the chapter with Malebranche's declaration of the first Principle of the Christian Religion: "The first Principle of the Christian Religion, that we must love and fear but one God, since there is only one God who can make us happy."[108]

In his philosophical system, as we have seen before, Malebranche is influenced by fifth century theologian Saint Augustine and the seventeenth century French philosopher René Descartes. In Summery, there are two aspects of Malebranche's philosophy that have been especially influential in the history of philosophy: (1) that we see all things through God, and (2) occasionalism.[109] Accordingly, the human knowledge of the world, is only possible through a relation between man and God.[110]

Malebranche demonstrates the fundamental elements of his moral system based on the two above aspects. He begins with love and says that unless we love God, or unless God continually imprints in us the Love of Good, we should love nothing. For that love being our will, we can love nothing, nor will anything without Him; since we cannot love particular goods, without determining towards those goods the motion of love which God gives us towards Him. So that as we love nothing but by the necessary Love we have for God, so we see nothing but by the natural knowledge we have of God: And all the particular idea's we have of the creatures are only limitations of the Idea of the Creator, as all the motions of the will for the creatures are only determinations of the motion for the Creator.

To justify his theory of love within the whole system, Malebranche treats the relation (*rapport)* between relations of perfection *(rapports de perfection*) and relations of size *(rapports de grandeur*), saying that relations of perfection cannot be clearly known

unless they are expressed with respect to size. The notion that man is of greater value than the beast is a relation of inequality in perfection, which demands that love and esteem be regulated by the knowledge of this relation or this truth. Malebranche argues that since we ought to love perfection, we ought to lobe beings closer to divinity in the scale of being in preference to lower beings and things. This Platonic observation leads Malebranche to an Augustinian examination of charity as the first of the Christian virtues, in which we should reserve the ordered love for God alone (a love of union, in Malebranche's language) because he is the only True Good and True Cause.[111]

Love, which is the main virtue or even the source of it, is the keystone in Malebranche's moral theory.[112] He maintains that virtue embodies a love of being in general, and of God, in particular, for God alone includes every perfection and so merits our full love. We would be perfectly virtuous if we loved God above all else, and apportioned our love of every other being to its place in this cosmic hierarchy.[113]

Like his scholarly ancestors, Malebranche maintains that goodness and tendency towards it are the chief ways of the formation of love. He argues that we cannot love something unless we at least perceive to as good. For Malebranche, the objects for human love could for instance be bodily and spiritual. Unlike Augustine, Malebranche sees no conflict between bodily and spiritual loves if we appropriate each object with the befitting degree of love. For example, he says, "it is not evil for us to love the body; but it is evil to love it more than the soul. It is not evil for us to love ourselves; but it is evil when we love ourselves more than we love God.[114]

Malebranche thus attentively considers the phenomenon of self-love. He defines self-love and the desire for happiness as "the natural motive to virtue."[115] For him God alone is our end and our good; reason alone is our law. To elucidate the role of self-love in relation to his conviction this reasons that "self-love or the invincible desire to be happy is the motive which ought to make us love God, unite ourselves to Him, and submit ourselves to His law."[116] He then

links self-love and other virtues; "a self-love sustained by faith and hope, and animated by charity." Consequently, he adds, "we can sacrifice temporary pleasures for future ones."[117]

However, Malebranche explains that because of the Fall, we love ourselves above all else, and our will has weakened so that without God's grace, we cannot act in accordance to the Order and Reason. Malebranche's account of sin and grace in his love-based morality are as follows. He maintains that no human being is truly innocent; everybody is marked by Adam's sin. This sin has altered the union of body and soul into a dependence. This dependence of the mind on the body, according to Malebranche, causes all errors and disorders into which we fall."[118]

Because of Adam's sin, no human being deserves the reward of eternal life, therefore, salvation for human being is possible only through God's Grace. Now we see how Malebranche elaborates the role of grace in his virtue-based moral system. Our self-love, he argues, "is the motive which, aided by grace, unites us to God as our good or cause of our happiness, and subjects us to Reason as our law or model of our perfection." Finally, he expresses that "we must truly and sincerely love order and unite ourselves to God by Reason."[119]

Clearly, Malebranche has combined certain terminology, each of which has its specific role in the process of human perfection. For Malebranche, Reason is the model of perfection, unification with God is the ultimate end, and love of order is the principal means for that unification.

Malebranche sites two fundamental reasons that justify love for God and unification with Him; that He is The Good and The Cause of happiness. Malebranche goes beyond this and contends that:

> It is necessary, that not only our Natural Love, I mean the Motion he produces in our Mind, should tend towards him: But moreover, That the Knowledge and the Light which he

> bestows upon it, should make us know any thing that is in him; for whatever comes from God can only be for God.[120]

According to Malebranche, God, as the most Perfect Good, is the only intrinsically lovable being. The human will is determined towards the good, and God is the most Perfect Being and the most Perfect Goodness. Therefore, God has created us to love Him, and this love is irresistible.

However, loving a less perfect being more than a perfect being is an imperfection which is the essence of sin. So we are inclined towards the lesser goods but not necessitated, for "there is no particular good that presents itself to us as the sole all-compelling fulfillment of our desires. Our liberty consists in our ability to 'suspend' our inclination to some particular good, and to redirect our unvarying desire for the general good to some other (apparent) particular good." This argumentation draws Malebranche's approach to the different objects of love, that determine the level of perfection and imperfection of love. Based on his criteria, the highest perfection should be found by and through the virtue of love of God.

Methodologically speaking, as we have seen in this chapter, Malebranche has employed theological and mystical elements to construct his moral theory. He is not alone and he is not the first Christian thinker who has made a synthesis of rational and religious foundations for his moral system. In this regard, he is assumed to be, more or less, a follower of his scholarly ancestors, St. Augustine and St. Thomas.[121]

However, one might claim that Malebranche has moved further than them. He has developed and strengthened the fact that the virtue-based moral system should depend on and derive from a Divine origination. In addition, according to Malebranche, the end and goal of morality and moral behaviors should be the Divine domain which would be fulfilled through the unification with God. For Malebranche,

Godliness is the final end for human being. He explains it in the following way:

> We shall be like God, if we are like the Man God. In fine, God will be all in us, and we all in God, in a far more perfect manner than that by which it is necessary for us to subsist, that we should be in him, and he in us.[122]

So far, we have observed that love of God as a major and basic source of virtue, has played a fundamental role in Malebranche's moral system. He does not seem to reject the Platonic or Aristotelian rational elements or philosophical facts, as the main heritage of the ancient Greek era; nor does he appear to eliminate the Augustinian or Thomistic theological principles.[123]

However, he seems to understand, interpret and employ them in the framework of his theological and religious context. This kind of understanding helped him to freely formulate his moral theory within his theistic metaphysical system. But I wonder about the extend to which Malebranche was successful in his elaboration; and how his virtue-based moral theory could be understood and evaluated within the modern and post-modern contexts.

This brings me to a brief summary. The strong and efficacious synthesis of traditional, rational and mystical observations from the Greek period up to the end of Middle Ages regarding the most critical issue of love of God, facilitated a scholarly foundation for Malebranche which allowed him to create his virtue oriented morality on the smooth and safe ground of love of God. Malebranche's examination has benefited both theoretically and methodologically from the heritage, and progressed through the scholarly developed doctrines.

We now come to some closing questions. Based on what I understood from Malebranche with respect to the concept of love of God, my main question involves the extent to which Malebranche is

able to adjust the theory of love in his entire moral system. Secondly, does Malebranche's understanding and interpretation of love of God help him to rely on it as the main virtue and the principal means for achieving perfection?

And finally, what are the similarities and differences between Malebranche's and Kāshānī's understanding and interpretation of the virtue of love of God? The answer to these questions will be demonstrated in the following chapter.

Malebranche believes that universal Reason is constant, and that Order is immutable. He confirms however that ethics vary through time and across borders (TE, 55). Although Malebranche accepted the absoluteness of the method, i.e. universal Reason, on which he constructed his whole moral system, he acknowledged the relativity of ethics with respect to time and place. However, does Malebranche's universality of method directs him toward any, if not all, absolute moral pattern acknowledged and followed by the whole universe?

Notes:

[1] This linguistic difficulty urges some modern theologian like Kierkegaard to rely on a metaphorical terminology in his discourse of spiritual works of love. See Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, ed. and English trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 209-210.

[2] It is interesting to be noted that even in a psychological context, the ambiguity and complexity of the notion of love is still under consideration. Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) is said to have commented at the end of his career, "We really know very little about love." See Elizabeth Dreyer, "Love," in Michael Downey, ed. *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1993), p. 619. It is also noticed by another psychologist that "love is too large, too deep ever to be truly understood or measured or limited within the framework of words." See M. Scott Peck, *The Roadless Traveled: A New Psychology of Love, Traditional Values and Spiritual Growth* (New York: A Touchstone Book, 1978), p. 81.

[3] Wittgenstein has pointed out that everyday grammar raises essentialist expectations. He also noted that the ordinary difficulties are redoubled in the religious realm.

See the well-known Lectures on Religious Belief, in Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*, ed. Cyril Barrett (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966.

[4] See Albert C. Knudson, *The Principles of Christian Ethics* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1929), pp. 119-120.

[5] Knudson, *The Principles of Christian Ethics*, pp. 119-120.

[6] See Elizabeth Dreyer, "Love," in Michael Downey, ed. *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1993), p. 622.

[7] It is beyond the scope of this research to deal with all critical semantic observations approaching the notion of love. For instance, Robert Hazo distinguishes seven critical notions occuring in discussion of love. There are denoted by: "in the tendential order, five basic terms: tendency in general, acquisitive desire, benevolent desire, sexual desire, and the desire for union; and, in the order of judgment, two basic terms: esteem and valuation." For a detailed explanation of the use of these terms, see Robert G. Hazo, *The Idea of Love*, Institute for Philosophical Research (New York: Praeger, 1967), pp. 11-36.

[8] With respect to the definition of 'love,' Psychology has likewise encountered the same semantic controversial difficulty. Scott Peck has claimed that because of the mysterious nature of love, no one has ever arrived at a truly satisfactory definition of love. In an effort to explain it, he continues, love has been divided into various categories: eros, philia, agape; perfect love and imperfect love, and so on. See M. Scott Peck, *The Roadless Traveled: A New Psychology of Love, Traditional Values and Spiritual Growth* (New York: A Touchstone Book, 1978), p. 81.

[9] See Elizabeth Dreyer, "Love," in Michael Downey, ed. *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1993), pp. 615-616.

[10] See his preface on Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1969), p. xvi.

[11] Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, books VIII and IX, has been mentioned as a primary source of classical writing on friendship. On Aristotle's account of philia as friendship, see also Nancy Sherman, "Aristotle on the Shared Life," in Neera Kapur Badhwar (ed.), *Friendship: A Philosophical Reader* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 91-92. See also Irving Singer, *The Nature of Love*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), part II, ch. 5.; David Bostock, *Aristotle's Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 167-187.

[12] See David Konstan, *Friendship in the Classical World*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

[13] See Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, books VIII and IX.

[14] Nancy Sherman has further reflected on Aristotelian theory of the necessity of friendship in the process of happiness. See Nancy Sherman, "Aristotle on the Shared Life," in Neera Kapur Badhwar (ed.), *Friendship: A Philosophical Reader* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 94-95.

[15] David Konstan, *Friendship in the Classical World*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

[16] For a full discussion of the Christian account of agape and *agapic* love, see Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, English trans. by Philip S. Watson (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), pp. 41-48.

[17] Knudson, *The Principles of Christian Ethics*, p. 120. Knudson quotes this statement from Anders Nygren.

[18] Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, English trans. by Philip S. Watson (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), p. 219.

[19] Aquinas, SU, I, 2, q. 26, a. 4, p. 705.

[20] *Ibid.*

[21] Aquinas, SU, I, 2, q. 27, a. 1, p. 707.

[22] Aquinas, SU, I, 2, q. 27, a. 2, p. 707.

[23] *Ibid*.

[24] *Ibid*., p. 704.

[25] *Ibid.*

[26] Aquinas, SU, I, 2, q. 27, a. 2, p. 707.

[27] In a linguistic, metaphorical approach, KierKegaard identifies the notion of love in the following way: "But what then is love? Love is to presuppose love; to have love is to presuppose love in others; to be loving is to presuppose that others are loving." See Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, ed. and English trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 223.

[28] Malebranche, ST, Chapter 5.

[29] Malebranche, ST, vol. I, pp. 9-10.

[30] ST, vol. I, p. 9.

[31] See Walton's Introduction to Malebranche's *Treatise on Ethics*, trans. with Introduction by Craig Walton (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1993), p. 36.

[32] ST, Book 3, part. 2, chapters 5.

[33] *Ibid*., chapters 6.

[34] Malebranche, ST, Book 3, part. 2, chapters 6.

[35] *Ibid.*, chapters 3.

[36] Malebranche, *Dialogue on Metaphysics and on Religion*, eighth and ninth dialogues.

[37] ST, Book 3, part. 2, chapters 6.

[38] See Jolley's introduction to *Dialogue on Metaphysics and on Religion*, English trans. by David Scott, edited by Nicholas Jolley, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

[39] ST, vol. I, pp. 399-411.

[40] *Ibid.*, pp. 399-401.

[41] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 8. 7. 1159a 3-4. It seems that for Aristotle, like other philosophers who followed him, love is not categorized as a virtue; it is regarded as a passion. See Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 2. 4. 1380b-1381b.

[42] Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, books VIII and IX, has been obviously remarked as a primary source of classical writing on friendship.

[43] Hauerwas and Pinches have delineated a contrast between Aristotle and Christianity, comparing how friendship is understood in the two traditions. They explain that Aristotle recognized the need for friends if we are to become virtuous. It is not the case that we must first become virtuous and then seek out similarly virtuous friends. In Aristotle's view, as the authors put it, "friendship itself is an activity by which we acquire the kind of steadfastness necessary for our being true friends." See Stanley Hauerwas and Charles Pinches, *Christians Among the Virtues: Theological Conversations with Ancient and Modern Ethics*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998.

[44] See David Konstan, *Friendship in the Classical World*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

[45] See Albert C. Knudson, *The Principles of Christian Ethics* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1929), p. 118.

[46] See Mark 12:29 in the New Testament, and see Deuteronomy 6:5 and 30:6 and Leviticus 19:18 in the Old Testament.

[47] See Knudson, The Principles of Christian Ethics, p. 140.

[48] For more details, see Knudson, *The Principles of Christian Ethics*, p. 140. In fact, Knudson believes that this kind of perfection is fundamentally metaphysical or religious rather than ethical. See p. 145.

[49] There are theological interpretation of Christian love in both human and Divine senses. For instance, Elizabeth Dreyer maintains that "The Christian idea of love has to include both the erotic aspect, i.e., being drawn to desire something or someone precious and appealing, and the agapic aspect, i.e., loving someone whose value lies primarily in his or her relationship to God. Each has its role and is interconnected with the other. Even God's love can be said to involve *eros* and desire… One might say that God is eminently the One-Who-Desires, the One who wishes our happiness and union, the One who was willing to take on flesh and die so that ultimate union might be possible." See Elizabeth Dreyer, "Love," in Michael Downey, ed. *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1993), p. 622.

[50] See J. Budziszewski, "The Pincovian Persuasion: Six Problems in Virtue Ethics (A Free Response to Seung)," *Social Theory and Practice*, vol. 17, issue 2 (Summer, 1991), p. 262.

[51] *Ibid*., p. 263.

[52] For the Neo-Platonic doctrine, as well as the Plotinus' philosophy and epistemology, see E. Brehier, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958; A. H. Armstrong, *The Architecture of the Intelligible Universe in the Philosophy of Plotinus*, Cambridge: The University Press, 1940; W. H. Inge, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, 2 volumes, London: Longmans, Green, 1929. See also *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, edited by Lloyd Gerson, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. On the discussion of love, eros, and agape in neo-Platonic and Plotinus' doctrine, see Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, English trans. by Philip S. Watson (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), pp. 182-199, 458-463.

[53] This is the last phrase of Plotinus' Second Tractate of the First Ennead, in which he has remarkably overlooked the notion of virtue and its place in his moral system.

[54] Plotinus has allocated one Tractate to the discussion of love. See Plotinus, *Enneads*, the Third Ennead, Fifth Tractate, pp. 175-183.

[55] Plotinus, after remarking the questions on love, says, "These important questions make it desirable to review prevailing opinions on the matter, the philosophical treatment it has received and, especially, the theories of the great Plato who has

many passages dealing with Love, from a point of view entirely his own." See Plotinus, *Enneads*, the Third Ennead, Fifth Tractate, p. 175.

[56] Plotinus, *Enneads*, the Third Ennead, Fifth Tractate, p. 177.

[57] *Ibid.*, p. 183.

[58] *Ibid.*, p. 183.

[59] *Ibid.*, p. 175.

[60] *Ibid.*, p. 183.

[61] *Ibid.*, p. 175.

[62] *Ibid.*, p. 177.

[63] *Ibid.*, p. 178.

[64] *Ibid.*, p. 178.

[65] *Ibid.*, p. 175.

[66] In this regard, Glenn Tinder remarks that "Augustine's extremist potentialities were fully realized in his love of the One Being who warrants and commands an extreme commitment." See Glenn Tinder, "Augustine's World and Ours," *First Things*, no. 78 (December 1997), p. 36.

[67] Tinder, Glenn, "Augustine's World and Ours," *First Things*, no. 78 (December 1997), p. 42.

[68] Tinder, Glenn, "Augustine's World and Ours," *First Things*, no. 78 (December 1997), p. 42. Augustine's concern about the issue of love of God or charity (*caritas*) could be found in his *City of God*, trans. by Henry Bettenson (London: Penguin Books, 1984), pp. 556-558. However, Augustine sets forth the meaning of the virtues of faith, hope, and love in his work of his later years, namely *Enchiridion.*

[69] See Elizabeth Dreyer, "Love," in Michael Downey, ed. *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1993), pp. 617-618.

[70] On the influence of neo-Platonism on Augustine, see Hannah Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996. See also Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, English trans. by Philip S. Watson (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), pp. 458-463.

[71] There are certain places in Augutine's works in which he has clearly developed the neo-Platonic theories such as goodness, happiness, immortality, beauty, likeness to God, providence, and vision of God. For instance, see his *City of God*, trans. by Henry Bettenson (London: Penguin Books, 1984), pp. 309-311, 355, 364, 374, 392-394.

[72] Knudson, *The Principles of Christian Ethics*, pp. 120-121. See also Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, English trans. by Philip S. Watson (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), pp. 476-482.

[73] Knudson, *The Principles of Christian Ethics*, p. 121. See also Hannah Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 26. For a full discussion on Augutinian account of the idea of Caritas, see Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, English trans. by Philip S. Watson (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), pp. 476-558.

[74] See Bonnie Kent, "Augustine's Ethics," in Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 215. See also Robert Adam, "The Problem of Total Devotion," in Neera Kapur Badhwar (ed.), *Friendship: A Philosophical Reader* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 108-132.

[75] See Glenn Tinder, "Augustine's World and Ours," *First Things*, no. 78 (December 1997), p. 36.

[76] In this regard see Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, English trans. by Philip S. Watson (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), pp. 458-463.

[77] See Knudson, *The Principles of Christian Ethics*, p. 123.

[78] *Ibid.*, pp. 129-130.

[79] Apparently, Augustine's personal, passional aspect of his love of God found frequent expressions in his Confessions. See Ethel M. Albert, *Great Traditions in Ethics* (Belmont, California: Wadsworth, Inc., 1988), p. 86.

[80] See Gerald W. Schlabach, ""Love is the Hand of the Soul": The Grammar of Continence in Augustine's Doctrine of Christian Love," *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, vol. 6, no.1 (1998), p. 67.

[81] Augustine, *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, trans. by John K. Ryan (New York: An Image Book-Doubleday, 1960), 10.37.61.

[82] Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, trans. by D. W. Robertsonn, The Library of Liberal Arts, (New York: Macmillan, 1958), 1.22.21.

[83] See Gerald W. Schlabach, ""Love is the Hand of the Soul," p. 77.

[84] See Hannah Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 28. Arendt is quoting this statement from Augustine's Sermon, 142, 3.

[85] Augustine, *The Confessions*, 7.11.17

[86] As Tinder explains, for Augustine, "a righteous human being, a member of the City of God, was one whose whole life was focused, through love, on the universal sovereign who provides assurance that beneath the seeming chaos of history there is a meaningful order." See Glenn Tinder, "Augustine's World and Ours," *First Things*, no. 78 (December 1997), p. 37.

[87] Hannah Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, p. 30. This is what Arendt has narrated from Augustine's *Confessions* I, 13, 21.

[88] Hannah Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, pp. 31-32.

[89] See Bonnie Kent, "Augustine's Ethics," in Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 206-209. Kent is narrating this demonstration from Augustine's Retract, I, I, 2.

[90] See Bonnie Kent, "Augustine's Ethics," in Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 216.

[91] In regard to the tendency towards good, Aquinas explains that "the movement of love has a two-fold tendency: towards the good which a man wishes to someone, to himself or to another, and towards that to which he wishes some good." See *Summa Theologica*, I, 2, q. 26, a. 4 (p. 706).

[92] Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, 1, q. 20, a. 1.

[93] *Ibid.*, I, 2, q. 26, a. 4 (p. 705).

[94] Aquinas, SU, I, 2, q. 28, a. 1 (p. 709).

[95] *Ibid.*, I, 1, q. 20, a. 1.

[96] *Ibid.*.

[97] *Ibid.*, II, 2, q. 27, a. 4.

[98] *Ibid.*, I, 2, q. 27, a. 2 (p. 707).

[99] *Ibid.*, I, 2, q. 66, a. 5-6 (pp. 869-871).

[100] *Ibid.*, I, 2, q. 27, a. 2 (p. 707); q. 66, a. 5-6 (pp. 869-871).

[101] *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 863.

[102] *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 863.

[103] *Ibid.*, II, 2, q. 23, a. 4.

[104] *Ibid.*, II, 2, q. 23, a. 4.

[105] *Ibid.*, II, 2, q. 23, a. 7.

[106] *Ibid.*, I, 2, q. 28, a. 5 (p. 713).

[107] *Ibid.*, I, 1, q. 20, a. 2.

[108] Malebranche, ST, Book 3, Part 2, Chapter 6.

[109] I mentioned before, in chapter three, that Malebranche is a well known French philosopher who developed a metaphysical theory called occasionalism.

[110] Malebranche has explained his theory of knowledge and Occasionalism in his several works. For his theory of knowledge, see Nicolas Malebranche, *Dialogues on Metaphysics and on Religion*, translated by Morris Ginsberg (London, 1923), pp. 86-98; Malebranche, *Treatise on Ethics*, translated by Walton (Boston, 1993), pp. 45-51. For his theory of Occasionalism, see Nicolas Malebranche, *Dialogues on Metaphysics and on Religion*, translated by Morris Ginsberg (London, 1923), pp. 51-60; B. Rome, *The Philosophy of Malebranche* (Chicago, 1963), pp. 162-190.

[111] See Malebranche, *Dialogue on Metaphysics and on Religion*, English trans. by David Scott, edited by Nicholas Jolley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), eighth and ninth dialogues.

[112] In his paper, William Frankena has examined the ethics of love as ethics of virtue and delineated the metaethical structure of such ethics and suggested that the characteristics of love appropriate to the structure. For his detail argumentation, see W. K. Frankena, "The ethics of love conceived as an ethics of virtue," *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1973), pp. 21-36.

[113] Malebranche shares the Platonic-Christian picture of the world as a chain of hierarchically ordered beings. See Charles J. McCracken, *Malebranche and British Philosophy* (Oxford, 1983), p. 86.

[114] Malebranche, TE, part I, chapter one, pp. 45-51.

[115] *Ibid.*, p. 220.

[116] *Ibid.*, pp. 220-221.

[117] *Ibid.*, p. 220.

[118] *Ibid.*, p. 114.

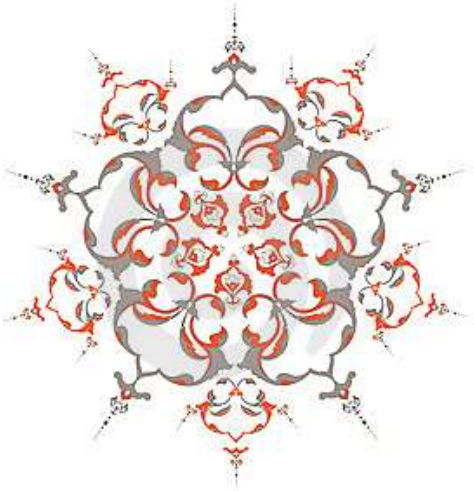
[119] *Ibid.*, p. 221.

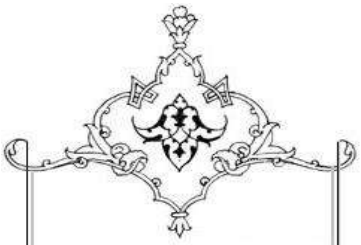
[120] Malebranche, ST, Book 3, Part 2, Chapter 6.

[121] Desmond Connel has an informative discussion on the Thomistic origin of Malebranche's ontologism. See Desmond Connel, "The Thomistic origin of Malebranche's ontologism," in V. Chappell, ed., *Early Modern Philosophers*, vol. II (New York, 1992), pp. 1-13.

[122] Malebranche, ST, Book 3, part. 2, chapters 6.

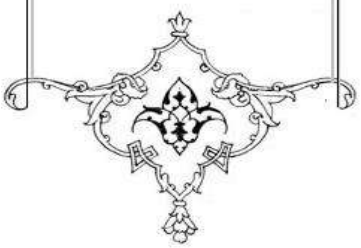
[123] In this regard, you can see, for example, Craig Walton, "Introduction," in N. Malebranche, *Treatise on Ethics*, translated by Walton (Boston, 1993), p. 37.





CHAPTER SIX

Kāshānī and Malebranche on The Virtue of Love of God



CHAPTER 6

Kāshānī and Malebranche on

The Virtue of Love of God

The exploration of a cross-cultural understanding through looking for sameness in difference and difference in sameness is my central thesis here. To achieve this observation, I will draw on the analogical reasoning of comparison advanced by Lee Yearley in his study *Mencius and Aquinas* (1990). This approach builds on an analysis of the focal meanings used to structure comparisons in order to provide a systematic means of exploring similarities and differences in specific thinkers. The method I rely on here is Yearley's idea of analogy, which is the study of resemblances that contain similarities in differences and differences in similarities.

This multicultural interdisciplinary method, besides all the advantages that Yearley examined in his well-done comparative work,[1] deserves a scholarly cultural reassurance for all the intellectual systems of human thought. I believe this certitude is important to the extent that on the one hand it creates intellectual confidence by which humanity today, in the time of post modernity, would be able to exterminate the clouds of skepticism which are covering and darkening the horizons of cultures, civilizations and religions.

On the other hand, the intellectual confidence conferred by this kind of cross-cultural and cross-religious understanding is the superior means for securing the whole world in certain climates; including inclusively but not exclusively moral, political and social features, to the extent that it provides a reliable substructure for any further

intellectual development, and demands a coherent and cooperative multicultural dialogue.

In applying this method, my particular goal will be to elucidate and assess the respective roles played by the concept of love of God in Kāshānī's and Malebranche's virtue-based ethics.

Relying on Yearley's method, I will explain the two thinkers' similarities and differences by examining the three different types of theories: primary, practical, and secondary. To understand the real resemblances and dissimilarities, I will distinguish among the characters and products of these three theories. In this examination, the two thinkers' successes and failures to understand the problems and the possibilities in their approaches will be revealed. In fact, based on the operations of the analogical imagination we will pursue the similarities in the differences and the differences in the similarities. Then, we will be able to approach comparative studies through the performances that arise from examining and using analogical expressions.

It should be emphasized that the operations of the analogical thought and expression is significant when we compare theories and views of religious and/or cultural flourishing. However, in this study, we will simultaneously pursue our analytical inquiry and consider such criticisms that arise from historical or textual studies.

I will develop the study by approaching a particular comparative exercise that points to the methodological problems it contains and the ways we may confront these problems. Within the history of philosophy, theology and cross-cultural studies, I choose two thinkers, Kāshānī and Malebranche, each of whom develops and effectively shapes a culture's view of the world. Within the thought of these philosophers, I have chosen the theory of virtue, because this part of a moral system is presumably persuasive in providing accurate practical insights. This specific ethical exploration also provides profound information about the thinkers' way of examining a significant area of human experience. Beside studying in general their

theories of virtue, I have preferred to focus on one specific virtue in detail, namely the virtue of love of God, since I believe that, as these thinkers aptly insist throughout their writings, the virtue of love of God as the central and initial virtue, plays a crucial role in their entire moral system.

Furthermore, there are actually many angles through which we may approach the nature of love of God, but the main angle I looked through in this research is the one that demonstrates the impact of love of God in morality and human perfection. Therefore, I would like to concentrate my comparative approach on three fundamental questions: How do they deal with the issue of love of God as a moral virtue? How do they interpret the virtue of love of God to be as the principle means in the process of human perfection? And finally, how do they adjust the virtue of love of God within the human worldly moral life? I would critically approach these questions in four major areas: background, methodology, doctrine, and consequences. It would be noteworthy at this juncture, to remark that this comparative inquiry will pursue the issue of love of God at a sufficiently theoretical level. So that we need not for the moment deal with questions about love's psychological, social, and/or biological location within the two thinkers' moral systems.

I. Background

Based on the groundwork that has been, through the previous chapters, laid for a proper understanding of our two thinkers' doctrines, the comparative study would be able to demonstrate how similar or identical motifs, whether or not themselves genetically related, were treated in two fundamentally associated civilizations which shared the same neo-Platonic heritage and faced the common problem of reconciling the discursive thought of Greece with the concrete givens of Semitic religions.

To achieve the methodological survey of similarities within the differences and differences within the similarities, we may ask into what historical and experimental background do Kāshānī's and Malebranche's treatments of love of God fall, and what is its place within their doctrines? There are in fact a number of facets to the answer(s) to this question, just as there are a number of contexts in which problems involving the idea of love of God can arise. It would be convenient to reply with regard to the both sides' exclusive and inclusive heritages upon which they have fabricated their whole intellectual systems, including moral doctrine and the theory of love of God.

It is true that both thinkers have conscientiously relied on Aristotelian language to develop and demonstrate their virtue-based morality. However, for both, Aristotle's ethical system is not sufficient to cover all features of virtue morality.[2] The virtue of love of God, for instance, is missing in Aristotle's ethics. We have seen in their philosophy and morality that both thinkers, Kāshānī and Malebranche, are more or less influenced by both Aristotelian and Neo-Platonic metaphysical thought. We may find some Aristotelian elements such as virtue-based theory and duality of soul and body in both thinkers' philosophy. On the other hand, the neo-Platonic principles such as centrality of love of God and unification with the One, as well as the Ultimate Good, are obviously the keystones of both thinkers' love-based morality. Now, the main question is which line of thought, rational or mystical, Aristotelian or neo-Platonic, would be able to help these thinkers develop their love-based moral theory? In other words, out of the two, Aristotelian rationality and neo-Platonic mysticism, which one accounts for our two thinkers fulfillment of the process of unification and ultimate perfection that they expect from their moral doctrines?

In answering the above-mentioned question, one may demonstrate certain reasons for the failure of the Aristotelian

metaphysics in the final analysis of the process of love based morality, particularly the stage of reaching the ultimate perfection.

First of all, Aristotle himself denies the logical possibility of any love process between the First Being and human being. Aristotle affirms that there can be no love between man and God because the distance between them is too great.[3]

Secondly, one may argue that the theory of mystical union cannot be logically formulated in the language of the Aristotelian Categories. In this fundamental perspective, the Neo-Platonic procedure of unification and transcendental return is more suited to our notion of mystical union here than to the Aristotelian metaphysical categories. Our thinkers have to rely on both Neo-Platonic language and doctrine to logically and experimentally explore the justification of their theory of love, particularly when the process of unification and ultimate perfection is encountered.

Thirdly, through our examination of the two thinkers' ethical theory, we found out that they have attempted to construct their theory on the Aristotelian virtue oriented basis. Although this grounding was understandable and in some cases helpful, when the theory advanced and developed within their metaphysical framework, it seemed to have gradually left the Aristotelian rational side towards a more Platonic-Neoplatonic mystical position. However, to my understanding, this development does not totally separate our thinkers' moral system from Aristotelian virtue-based morality. Rather, it demonstrates the fact that Aristotelian virtue theory has been, by our thinkers' neo-Platonic examinations, understood and interpreted in a new context; namely the more intuitive and experimental context than a rational and theoretical one.

Putting aside, for the moment, the ancient Greek influences on the two thinkers, we may find two other figures very influential in the development of our thinkers' morality. On the one hand, the profound influence of St. Augustine on Malebranche, particularly in the domain

of morality, is highly obvious from Malebranche's works. Schneewind has remarked that much of Malebranche's ethic is Augustinian. He explains that like Augustine, Malebranche made central to morality his ideas of right love and wrong love. Furthermore, Schneewind continues that like Augustine, Malebranche made the rightness or wrongness of a love dependent on its relation to its object.[4] On the other hand, Kāshānī, in his moral theory, is highly influenced by Ghazālī. Kāshānī's ethical writings – in their method, framework, and doctrine – are more or less influenced by and representing Ghazālī's moral works.[5] However, Ghazālī's metaphysical examinations of topics such as causality and knowledge of God, were not followed by Kāshānī. As we have already seen, Kāshānī, in his cosmological and metaphysical observations, is considered as the follower of his master, namely Mullā Sadrā Shīrāzī.

The main heritage our two thinkers have primarily received from the above mentioned figures, namely Malebranche from Augustine and Kāshānī from Ghazālī is to my understanding, a neo-Platonic methodological examination, by which our two thinkers were similarly able to construct their love-based morality, presenting it in an appropriate language, and explore it through an intuitive and experimental elaboration.

At this juncture, we may conclude that Kāshānī and Malebranche have some common reference points in both philosophical and theological backgrounds, which enable them to share some fundamental standpoints. However, the differences we see in their intellectual and traditional achievements, as well as the diversity of the horizons they have attempted to contemplate through, causes certain perspectives of their metaphysical, epistemological and ethical doctrines. In the following discussions, we will critically observe some of these differences.

II. Methodology

As we have understood before, the two thinkers' methodological examination is a synthesis of certain disciplines. Out of what we have had so far, it is so easy to understand that in the mind and writings of both Kāshānī and Malebranche, the Greek philosophical tradition and the Islamic/Christian theological tradition met and enriched each other.

On Kāshānī's side, it is so difficult to identify a single methodological procedure as a dominant one in his philosophy, as well as his moral system. We have learned before that Kāshānī by following his master, Mullā Sadrā, adjusted the rational methodology of Greek philosophy with Mystical intuition. He has also attempted to extract the truth from tradition and religious scripture, while developing and applying these truths in an articulate way on the other. In fact, Kāshānī's methodological bridge between philosophy and mysticism, rationalism and traditionalism, orthodoxy and modernism was merely a logical way to seek the truth and to develop a multi-disciplinary path in his philosophical and moral theories. This effort enables Kāshānī to rely on a synthesis of methodological perspectives and various disciplines of the academia as stepping stones in his intellectual thought.

However, it seems that, in the field of morality and particularly the knowledge of God and the virtue of love of God, Kāshānī has more tendency towards the intuitive experience and mystical methodology. As we have seen so far, and we will see more in the forthcoming discussion, Kāshānī, in his argumentation regarding the issue of love of God and its role as the means for the final human accomplishment, relies on practical and mystical experiences, as well as intuitive observations. Furthermore, Kāshānī, in every single chapter of his moral writings, has frequently recognized and examined the related

Qurānic quotations and other religious traditions such as the Prophetic *hadīths*.[6]

Malebranche, on the other side, has systematically relied on a blended methodological attitude such as a theological intuition and a philosophical observation. We saw before that the former is mostly due to Augustine and the latter to Descartes. However, Malebranche has synthesized them in a unique methodological procedure, and employed it through his entire intellectual system, which includes morality. It is also important to note that Malebranche, in certain parts of his works, particularly in his ethical writings, has highly relied on his religious heritage, as well as Biblical tradition. This methodological examination clearly indicates that Malebranche, like Kāshānī, not only believes in and admires the revealed vocabulary and terminology, but also employs it in a systematic manner for both understanding the disciplinary features and interpreting and presenting them in an instructional fashion.

Now, we have to recognize that language, as well as terminological elaboration, are two of the most critical areas in which both thinkers were engaged in their moral system. They both believe in the reality of revealed words and vocabularies, relying on it in their scholarly development and employ it in their systematic disciplines. However, this religious terminology (or we may say revealed vocabulary) and theological language has its own advantages and disadvantages.

On the one hand, as Malebranche states, everyone imagines he understands the significance of the terms 'to love,' 'to fear,' 'to honor,' 'charity,' … (TE, 54). Terms in ethics, Malebranche claims, are "the most obscure and confused; and yet they are regarded as the most clear because they are the most common" (TE, 54). In almost the same tone and language, Kāshānī explains the difficulty and dilemma ordinary people may face when they approach such technical terms and notions (MB, VIII, 26, 54, 77).

However, the most important advantage we may acknowledge here, at least for our purpose of comparing the two Scripture-oriented thinkers, is the fact that the two thinkers have been engaged with almost the same common religious vocabularies. To some extent, this sameness helps them to perceive and understand their appropriate meanings, and to share and communicate with each other almost at the same level. It goes without saying that the recognition of the latter advantage would be highly appreciated and welcomed in our comparative study.

On the methodological stage, there is another area of comparison; whether they succeed in harmonizing the classical version of neo-Platonic love with the love they understand from their traditional orientation at every point. Is Kāshānī successful in adjusting the Plotinus' version of love of God, the One, which deserves a mystical feature, with the notion of *mahabbah* and *`ishq* that he understands from the Holy Qurān and the Prophetic tradition?

Is Malebranche successful in harmonizing the neo-Platonic love, in its Augustinian version, with the notion of *agape* that he understands from the Holy Bible? In other words, how do they reflect on and interpret the intuitive, mystical examination of love within their own theological contexts?

What we understood so far is the fact that it was their attempt not only to harmonize the mystical and traditional examinations of love, but also to demonstrate that there is no difference between them. In other words, for both scholars, the neo-Platonic version of love seems to be a consistent interpretation of the love that they understand from the revealed words such as *mahabbah* and *agape*. However, the way and context in which they presented their elaboration will be challenged through the forthcoming discussions.

We understand that the two thinkers have examined a number of related methodological observations as a synthesis of certain disciplinary elaborations. This methodological synthesis was, to my

understanding, dominated and colored by an intuitive experience and a revealed-traditional examination. Therefore, methodologically speaking, we would conclude that they are similar in their epistemological approach to the related sources, as well as in their reliance on Scriptures.

III. Doctrine

The main doctrine of Kāshānī and Malebranche here is the exploration and development of the virtue of love of God as the fundamental virtue in their whole moral system, and the principal means in the process of human perfection. At this stage, I am going to critically examine their doctrine and carefully study the resemblances that contain similarities in differences and differences in similarities.

To achieve this cross-cultural and cross-religious inquiry, I will pursue my analytical observation in four different but related features: the concept of virtue, the term of love, the notion of God, and the theory of love of God.

a. The Concept of Virtue

We may begin our comparative analysis of Kāshānī and Malebranche's theories of virtue by briefly approaching the general notion of virtue that appears in each thinker. Comparing the two thinkers' definition of virtue, as well as the list of virtues found in their writings, may present some problems when the thinkers come from basically different cultures, religions and times.

In this case, special care and attention is needed not only to comprehend their procedure for understanding the problems but also to perceive the technique they apply in presenting their theories and doctrines. I agree with Yearley that we must not only carefully

consider texts and contexts, but we must also understand the relationships in the thinkers among their different kinds of theories, distinguishing, for example, among their primary, practical, and secondary theories.

Malebranche did not conceptually tie virtue to what brings good to the agent. Rather, he defined virtue in terms of conformity to order. He contends that a habitual right love – a habitual love of the order of things according to their perfections – constitutes virtue (TE, 53). Action, according to Malebranche, is obviously fundamental for the nature of virtue as a habit (TE, 69).

Malebranche considered virtue as man's perfection (TE, 45) and in some cases equated it and defined it as perfection (TE, 49). However, he presents his understanding of perfection in a more metaphysical elaboration. In his eyes, beings are more or less perfect in proportion to their participation in the Divine perfection (TE, 47). The degree of participation, which is confirmed by a special relationship with the divinity, determines the type and degree of virtue and love that happen for the participant. Malebranche clearly distinguishes between virtue and duty and alerts others not to confuse the two (TE, 54).

For Kāshānī, on the other side, virtue is a *habitus,* which is formed in us by the repetition of personal actions, by a series of successful efforts that enable us to keep improving (HM, 60-61). Virtue requires the development of habits leading to the choice of the mean between extremes in conduct (HM, 56-58). In the eyes of Kāshānī, two fundamental principles play the major roles in the formation of any moral virtue: knowledge and action. knowledge enables man to appropriately choose the mean between extremes; the repetition of action enables him to ordain the requirement of a *habitus*. To achieve a moral virtue, man must choose the mean between the extremes. Here a profound distinction emerges between Kāshānī and Malebranche. We don't see in Malebranche's definition of virtue the vocabulary of choosing, the mean, and the extremes.

Like many Muslim and Christian theologians and moralists, Kāshānī maintains that man has 'free will' by nature. This 'free will' plays a significant role in the formation of any moral virtue or vice. On the contrary, Malebranche perceives man's will as a natural capacity such as sight or hearing rather than a faculty. To explain man's freedom, Malebranche argues that we innately love the good and desire happiness; a propensity towards good and moving away from bad. Malebranche calls this propensity freedom or free will.

On the other hand, with respect to the role of knowledge, we see a sharp and certain consideration in Malebranche's account of morality and the knowledge it requires. Actually, as Schneewind understands, we may conceive that Malebranche has basically made morality a special realm of knowledge. According to Malebranche, the knowledge we require to be virtuous is not knowledge of a deeper truth than we usually possess about how to attain our own good. It is not the knowledge of God's commands; not even of those He imposes on everyone alike, as it is for the natural lawyers. It is not scientific or metaphysical knowledge of the interconnection of everything in nature, as it is for Spinoza. Instead, it is the knowledge of a unique relationship, and a practical knowledge essentially tied to the guidance of action. In this regard, Schneewind declares that for the first time moral philosophy had a subject matter of its own that was capable of rational study.[7]

Some parts of Malebranche's concerns are theoretically recognized and accepted by Kāshānī. For example, Kāshānī also signifies the connection between knowledge and morality (MB, VI, 122), as well as the relation of knowledge to the practical realm as Malebranche (MB, VI, 123). One may claim that these two principles are the fundamental grounds for any understanding of the two thinkers' morality. However, one cannot discount the metaphysical and ontological opinions distinguishing the two thinkers' approach to the same problems.

b. The Term of Love

As I explained before, one of the most critical parts of our examination here seems to be the linguistic and terminological features of the concept, as well as the meaning of 'love.' In spite of the simplicity and clarity commonly realized by ordinary people, the complexity and ambiguity of its meaning, definition and application are still being intellectually analyzed. Fortunately, both our thinkers who were cognizant of the difficulty, alerted us to the complication of the notion.[8]

Kāshānī defines the concept of love (*mahabbah*) as propensity for that which is pleasant. He argues that love refers to the inclination of nature (*mayl at-tab`*) to something that is pleasure-giving. If this inclination is intense, it is called passionate love (*`ishq*) (MB, VIII, 8). In this definition, pleasure and inclination are included in the nature of love. Hence, the greater inclination leads to the more intense love experiences. For Kāshānī, the highest level of love (*mahabbah*) and the strongest inclination toward an object is called *`ishq*. Furthermore, according to Kāshānī, knowledge (*ma`rifah*) plays a significant role in the process of love or hate. The first thing worthy of attention is that one cannot imagine love except after understanding and cognition, because man does not love a thing that he does not know. Hence, love cannot be attributed to an inanimate object. Rather, it is characteristic of living and perceiving beings. Therefore, inclination toward or aversion to a thing comes after the thing is known (MB, VIII, 8, 16).

Malebranche considers love to be a kind of passion that the soul feels within itself without using any idea. He defines love within his psychological context, as one of the sensations and passions of the soul that represent nothing external which is like them.[9] In this regard, Malebranche states that "man is capable of three things: knowing, loving, and feeling" (TE, 49). He then explains that knowing and loving are voluntary but emotion such as the enjoyment of pleasure and the dislike for pain, are involuntary and come naturally. So, in this

process, our responsibility is to know the truth and love the Order of God (TE, 49). He says, "our chief duty, the one for which God has created us, is the love, which is the virtue of virtues" (TE, 49).

Malebranche maintains that the natural inclinations lead man toward the Universal Good, i.e. God. In this process, the soul can apprehend its determination toward any particular good until it has compared a number of competing goods and has discovered the one in which the universal good is most completely realized (ST, I, 9-10). Then Malebranche links man's freedom, or we may say, *will*'s decision, and the theory of love. He argues that the active identification of the soul with a pleasant object, in which one realizes the greatest good and therefore the greatest happiness is *love*. Malebranche divides the object of love into the Universal Good or God, and the particular goods. We love the particular goods innately, and the Universal Good or God, voluntarily and freely (ST, I, 9). However, as we have already examined, Malebranche uses the notion of freedom within his own metaphysical context.

When we compare these two approaches to the issue of love, we realize that their metaphysical perspectives have been clearly manifested in the process of their understanding of the nature of love. Both believe that love is an inclination towards an object. However, for Malebranche, both inclination and object are internal and caused by God. For Kāshānī, the object of love could be found within the human mind and, furthermore, human knowledge and will play significant roles in any kind of inclination. For Malebranche, love like any other virtue, is a Divine gift that is either naturally inspired in the human soul or voluntarily acquired by him; and for Kāshānī, an inclinational virtue which ensues deliberate and habitual self-cultivation.[10]

Another area of critical exploration is an analytical comparison between the different kinds of love that our two thinkers have elaborated. Malebranche initially considered the different types of love. For instance, in some places, Malebranche talks about love as *union* and love as *kindness* (TE, 60,62). It is through love as union with

the object of love that man loves God who is the only Good and the only Cause of happiness, and wishes to unite with Him in order that God might act in him and make him happy (TE, 62). Through love as kindness man loves persons of merit with love as wishing for the good which another person needs. Malebranche indicates that we love them, and even when they are in no position to do any good for us, because they have more perfection and virtues than others (TE, 62).

Elsewhere, Malebranche differentiates between three types of love; Love determined by esteem, Love as respect, and Love as benevolence or kindness (TE, 169, 173). Love as union or simple esteem, means to unite ourselves with a beneficial object or one that causes our happiness. This is to be proportioned to the excellence and perfection of each being. Love as respect, means to conform ourselves to someone who is the model or rule for our perfection. This relative submission of the mind is to be proportioned to the subalternate power of intelligent occasional causes. Love as benevolence, means to feel benevolence toward someone, and to wish him happiness and perfection. This is owed to all of those who are capable of enjoying the goods which we can share with them (TE, 169-173).[11] With respect to the object of love, the only difference we see in the two categories, is the addition of the love of respect.

As we distinctly comprehend here, love has three different meanings in these categorizations. Malebranche himself insists that the term of love is equivocal and the three different meanings – namely love as union, conformity, and feeling – should be distinguished (TE, 169). Love of God, however, is clearly, in both categories, classified under love as union with the object of love.

These two categorizations of the types of love could be found in Kāshānī's works, but with a different terminology and metaphysical justification. According to Kāshānī, love (*mahabbah*) is classified within several dimensions.[12] In one case, he categorizes love into five types: (1) The first is self-love. Every living being loves itself first. Self-love means every living being has a natural desire to persevere in

its existence and avoid death. This love naturally extends to the perfection of an individual's existence and everything that helps to preserve that perfection (MB, VIII, 9-10).

(2) The second category of love is benefit (*al-ihsān*). Man loves those who benefit him. This second object of love concerns only the means to one's own existence. It is in the nature of the love of the means that, once the aim is attained, the means lose their value (MB, VIII, 11).

(3) Man may love something other than himself for its own sake, not for any benefit he may receive from it. This love by itself causes him happiness. It is a true and perfect love, inasmuch as its object is beyond a man's own existence. Beauty, for example, is loved in this way; for the perception of beauty is a delight, loved for its own sake and not for the satisfaction of physical desires (MB, VIII, 11-12).

(4) Man loves beauty in general. The term beauty (*husn* or *jamāl*) can be applied to things not perceived by the senses as well as to well-proportioned shapes and agreeable colors. Beauty in anything means that there exists in it the perfection that befits it. Therefore, when we speak of a beautiful character in a man, we refer to the good qualities which are not perceived by the senses but by the inner sight (*al-basīrah al-bātinah*). Thus, the one who loves the saint or the prophet, loves him because of the beauty of his character (*husni khulqihī*) (MB, VIII, 12-15).

(5) The fifth category of love is the mysterious, hidden relationship (*al-munāsabah al-khafīyyah*) between two persons, not because of beauty or any advantage, but merely as a result of a certain spiritual affinity between them (MB, VIII, 15).

Kāshānī, after his exploring all these five categories for love, demonstrates that when one person has all five qualities which evoke love, he would inspire more intense love than someone endowed with only one or two qualities. Then Kāshānī concludes that only in God are all five qualities in their perfect form united. Hence, God, for Kāshānī,

is the only right and perfect object who deserves man's authentic love (MB, VIII, 16-23).

As we have seen before, Kāshānī indicates that love is the inclination of nature to something that is pleasure-giving (MB, VIII, 8). Hence in the case of God, it is the soul that apprehends Him and His Names, inclines to Him, and naturally loves Him after knowing and apprehending the Beauty in Him. So, love of God is defined, by Kāshānī and Ghazālī alike, as the inclination of man's nature produced when his soul gets pleasure by apprehending His Beautiful Attributes. This inclination is the disposition of the virtue of love.[13] Of course this Divine love, as the best and strongest means, facilitates the process of nearness (*qurb*) between lover and the beloved (MB, VIII, 43).

Regarding the non-Divine love, our thinkers express their understandings and interpretations in different ways. First of all, neither thinkers consider loving a person a love of union. However, both philosophers relate this kind of love to human perfection but in different languages and presentations. For instance, according to Kāshānī, we love a person because we see some beauty and perfection in him. In fact the object of love in this case is beauty and perfection itself (MB, VIII, 12). However, Malebranche contends that we love a person because we wish beauty and perfection for him (TE, 169).

In closing this section, I would like to raise a critical question. Is it reasonable or comprehensible to describe God's love with the language accorded to love in our daily life? In a theological context, one may criticize that because human love is marred by worldly affairs and sin, in some cases, theologians, for example, emphasize the differences rather than the similarities between the experiences of this world and the Divine world. This lack of connection between human and Divine loves is most obvious in the case of physical, sensual, sexual love, whose imagery is a cornerstone of the mystical tradition but whose reality in time has always been a victim of suspicion. Nevertheless, it seems that our two thinkers do not see any difficulty employing the same language for the justification of the meaning they

understand from the daily and common words such as love with what they apply to the Divine realm such as the notion of love of God.

With respect to this terminological dilemma, we may reflect on another concern. Can we conclude that all love has the potential to enhance our apprehension of the Divine, and to participate in, and lead to the infinite fulfillment of love, in a God who is Love? The answer to these concerns will be partially elaborated by our thinkers in the forthcoming examination of the virtue of love of God.

c. The Notion of God

I think this part of our comparative analysis deserves less complication because of the high similarity and sameness we have observed from the two thinkers' theological perception of God. They have theoretically and practically affirmed and determined that God is and should be the center of the whole moral system. The notion of God as the object, and of course the only real object, of love demonstrate a significant meaning for both thinkers in the formation of their theory of the virtue of love, in particular, and the whole moral system, in general. For both, God is One, Omnipotent, Omniscient, and the only Creator. They have demonstrated this metaphysical observation in almost the same vocabulary.

As we have already seen, Kāshānī has approached the issue of God in two certain realms: philosophy and mysticism. In the realm of philosophy, Kāshānī affirms that God, as the Pure Existence (*al-wujūd al-mahd*), is the cause, the source, and the ground of all things and all types of existence (UM, 14-17). In a mystical context, Kāshānī is relying on a specific language and maintains the concept of God as the Truth (*al-Haqq*). Being is the Truth which subsists by Itself while everything else subsists by It. This Truth is One and Unique, since it is the self-subsisting and self-necessary existence (KM, 35-42; UM, 14).

In another intuitive approach, Kāshānī, employs Ishraqi's terminology, i.e. the concept of light,[14] and identifies the Being as the Light. God is the Light, which is hidden because of the excess of His Light (HQ, 186-188). Hence no veil can cover Him because every veil is a limitation and God is above all limitations. Contrarily, His Light covers and includes everything to the extent that every being or reality is in the realm of existence by His Light (KM, 9-10). The Divine Names and Attributes (*asmā` wa sifāt*) are united with the Divine Essence, while in themselves they are distinct from each other by their concepts (KM, 19-20). The Name Allah is the source of all His Names, or if we are to use its mystical term, the mother of all Names (*ummul Asmā`*) (KM, 116). For our purpose here, the result of Kāshānī's different approaches is the same, particularly if we examine them in the context of Mullā Sadrā 's theosophical synthesis.[15]

Now, to accurately comprehend Kāshānī's understanding of God, we must add the traditional perspective to the above mentioned synthesis. As we have already learned, Kāshānī, like his teacher, Mullā Sadrā, and his predecessor in ethics, Ghazāli, relies on the Qurānic terminology in his understanding and elaboration of the notion of God. We saw before that Kāshānī justifies his Qurānic-traditional observation of God within his entire metaphysical system, as well as his ethical doctrine.[16] This elaboration must be acknowledged when we approach his examination of the theory of love of God.

On the other side, Malebranche's understanding of God rests on his theological idea about God's Uniqueness and Sovereignty in the whole universe. He shares this metaphysical perspective with Kāshānī, but develops God's Sovereignty in terms of his own ideas of cause-effect and the God-man relationship.

Malebranche maintains that, "God is all Beings, because he is Infinite and Comprehends all; but He is no Being in particular."[17] Malebranche believes that "There is then but one only true God, and he the one only true Cause."[18] Based on his metaphysical cosmology, Malebranche argues that God is the real cause of all human activities,

including his feelings and intellectual reflections (TE, 64-65). God, for Malebranche, is not only the Creator of the world, including human beings, but also the Cause of every single action and movement that occurs in the universe (TE, 149).

Like Kāshānī, Malebranche, as a religious and faithful scholar, is highly influenced by the Christian tradition in his perception, as well as his application, of the notion of God. In this respect, Malebranche doesn't see any difficulty in comprehending the traditional determination of the concept of God within his metaphysical observation. He sees no conflict between the God he defines as the only Cause in the whole universe and the God the Scripture describes as the Creator of the World.

In comparing the two thinkers' understanding of God's notion, we see more similarities than differences. There might be certain reasons for the dominance of their similarities and sameness over their differences. First, they both have systematically approached the issue of God from a theological perspective. As theologians, and not merely as philosophers, they have advanced their study of God and His attributes on a mystical-theological basis. This methodology, in my view, helps them perceive and contemplate the issue from similarly theological horizons. I see a more intuitive perspective, rather than a rational attitude, in this methodological approach. Secondly, as religious thinkers, both philosophers are highly influenced by their Abrahamic theological disciplines. This Abrahamic background enables them to understand and interpret the concept of God in a similar fashion.

Of course I do realize and acknowledge the theological differences between Islamic and Christian theological perspectives in certain areas such as the Trinity, for instance. But these differences do not jeopardize the similarity we expect here from our two thinkers, because we merely consider and study the notion of God as the object of love in the theory of love of God, regardless of the role this notion plays in the Christian Trinity. In another words, here for the purpose of

our inquiry, we are seeking the two thinkers' intuitive observation about God within the context of morality, rather than theological perspectives. Hence, at this juncture, there is no need, and it is out of the scope of this inquiry, to engage in a very profound debate about the Trinity, for example, and its related theological features.

Finally, it is noteworthy to remark that both thinkers explore man's process for knowing God in almost the same manner. Both maintain that we know God without mediation, in an immediate and direct view and Malebranche adds that, He is the only being we know in this way. Kāshānī explains that God's Essence, as well as His Names and Attributes, cannot be fully comprehended by created beings (UM, 14-17). Malebranche similarly affirms that our limited knowledge of God does not extend to His Essence, to His Absolute Being (ST, I, 391-411). What we see, Malebranche argues, is always a particular; but God does not exist in this manner because He is the whole, and includes within Himself all particulars without being one of them (ST, I, 399-401).

I would like to conclude that, in my understanding, the two thinkers have presented almost the same description of God to the extent that their similarities here seem greater than their differences. It is obviously understandable that, in spite of their differences in religion, culture, and even metaphysical perspectives, both philosophers have jointly reached an agreement in their understanding of the critical issue of God and their presentation of the concept with a systematic terminology.

d. The Theory of Love of God

Our examination of Kāshānī and Malebranche's ideas on the virtue of love of God focuses on how and why each distinguishes Divine love from non-Divine love and expands the meaning and

application of love of God into a moral domain. However, before beginning that examination, we need to explore how the virtue of love of God appears so significant in the eyes of our two thinkers and, at the same time, differs from other moral virtues. Analyzing those significances and differences will help us understand Kāshānī and Malebranche's accounts.

Let me first elucidate the idea that both thinkers have linked the issue of love of God to the process of creation. Kāshānī maintains that love is the cause of the ordering of all existent things, so that no existent thing may be devoid of some love, just as it may not be devoid of some measure of existence (*wujūd*) (KM, 85-88). Likewise, Malebranche demonstrates that God has created us for love (TE, 49). We may understand and interpret these two statements in different ways. In one interpretation, we may say that, according to them, God has created the universe, including human being, out of His Love and because of His Love. In this case, the Divine Love is the cause of creation. In another analysis, we may say that both thinkers are aiming at a related issue, that is the idea of the love of God as the ultimate destination of human's creation, or even the whole universe's creation. In this case, love of God is assumed as the end of the process of creation; and it would be part of our discussion here.

We now must explore how Kāshānī and Malebranche actually recognize the virtue of love of God as the main virtue and, at the same time, employ it as the center of their entire moral system. Furthermore, as a part of our discussion, we will examine how these thinkers locate the virtue of love of God in the process of human perfection.

Both thinkers believe that the virtue of love of God signifies the bedrock of the virtue-based morality, but they demonstrate it in different manners. Malebranche's theory of love of God rests on his ideas about Divine Sovereignty and its strong impact on the God-man relationship (TE, 149-150). Although he shares this Divine virtue, i.e. love of God, with Kāshānī, he develops it in terms of his own metaphysical ideas and the conflicts he faces. Malebranche argues that

we have to love God for two reasons: He is the only object of love and He is the only cause of our happiness and perfection (TE, 149). In the eyes of Malebranche, God as the only Good (TE, 62) is the only loveable object for humans (TE, 104).

Furthermore, Malebranche demonstrates three more reasons for the centrality and importance of love of God: first, he explains that love is not only the principal of the moral virtues, rather it is the unique, fundamental virtue (TE, 53). Secondly, love plays a significant role in the process of achieving pleasure and happiness. He affirms that love makes us happy (TE, 159). Happiness and perfection are rewards that should be earned by the love of God (TE, 159). Thirdly, love transforms the lover according to the object he loves (TE, 105). Hence, when we love God, this love unites us with God and enables us to achieve the God's perfection.

In another approach, Malebranche has clarified the process of love of God as a fundamental moral virtue. He argues that "our chief duty, the one for which God has created us, here is the love which is the virtue of virtues, the universal virtue, the fundamental virtue" (TE, 49). In this statement, Malebranche demonstrates that love of God is the goal of the creature and, at the same time, is both virtue and duty. However, elsewhere, he alerts us not to confuse the notion of virtue with the notion of duty (TE, 54-55). Hence, we have to find a justification for this statement from his definition of virtue. We may conclude that, according to Malebranche, love itself is a virtue but acquiring it is a duty.

Kāshānī, on the other hand, maintains that the virtue of love of God is the core virtue because of three reasons: first, it is the main and ultimate goal of a moral system (*ghāyat al-Akhlāq*) (HM, 59). Second, achieving love of God requires man's heart to be purified of all sins and moral vices. Third, love of God, as the main goal, demands other moral virtues and virtuous behaviors for an apt fulfillment of that goal. If somebody really loves God, he or she should obey Him and follow His commands (MB, VIII, 25, 78).

In our comparative examination, we could critically analyze the above-mentioned passages on the centrality of love. Two major issues emerge from the two thinkers' elaboration. First, both thinkers relate the importance of the virtue of love of God to the role it plays in the process of human perfection. Secondly, for both, virtue of love of God is the main virtue because by it and through it man is able to achieve other moral virtues and fulfil his moral duties.

Furthermore, at this juncture, I would like to clearly recognize the two thinkers' appropriate response to whether the virtue of love God is an end by itself or just a certain means to achieve something else. How do they confront this question, and in any case, does it have any effect on the consequences they expect from the centrality of the virtue within the whole moral system?

For Kāshānī, as I understand it, the virtue of love of God is both an end and a means, but in two different directions. It is the ultimate end in any virtue-based moral system (HM, 59). However, in the process of human perfection, the virtue of love of God, for Kāshānī, is a means, and of course the main means (MB, VIII, 39-40). By achieving this virtue and through its development, man is able to promote himself towards the ultimate perfection, which is the nearness to God (*qurb*) (HM, 166).

For Malebranche, on the other hand, the virtue of love of God, like any other virtue, is the best means to happiness and perfection. Malebranche, in some places, maintains that love of God is not the end; it is a means. God makes us happy by love and through love (TE, 158-160). However, in some places, he confirms that love of God itself is an end. He argues that we are rational creatures, so our virtue and perfection is to love and let us work for our perfection (TE, 49).

If we acknowledge that virtue is not its own reward and it brings with it a kind of happiness, we would logically accept that the path toward virtue, and through virtue towards happiness, is an endless one that is never achieved solely by our own effort, without relying on

other intellectual and mystical experiences. It is rightly mentioned that there is a complex relation between happiness and virtue. Explicitly concerned with happiness in his ethics, Aristotle provides us with a powerful picture of how the virtues are necessary for happiness.[19] Our two thinkers' examination of the theoretical and practical relationship between happiness and virtue, in general, and love of God, in particular, will be contemplated in the forthcoming discussion about consequences.

According to Malebranche, there are three fundamental conditions for the love of God. He maintains that the soul must love God by means of a free love, a love by choice, and a reasoning love (TE, 62). However, we may have difficulty in understanding these qualities for love when we approach them in the context of Malebranche's own metaphysics. We have to recall that, according to Malebranche, man sees only because God enlightens him; and wills only because God animates him or makes him love (TE, 64). Given these metaphysical observations, one may ask what the denotation of the human side would be in the process of free love and love by choice? We do not see this kind of approach in Kāshānī's elaboration.

Finally, with respect to the issue of the virtue of love of God, we may conclude that both thinkers, regardless of their differences in the metaphysics of God-man relationship, share in two major points: first, both believes that the virtue of love of God, as the central virtue or the only virtue (for Malebranche), plays the main role in shaping a whole moral system. Secondly, both maintain that the virtue of love of God is the main or the only means in the process of human perfection. In the following discussion, we see the consequences that they expect from this theory in further detail.

IV. Consequences

It seems that Kāshānī seeks two major goals or fundamental consequences in his observation and presentation of love of God. On

the one hand, he wants to complete the process of human perfection by appropriately situating the virtue of love of God. On the other hand, he attempts to adjust the virtue of love of God, as the main and key virtue, in his whole moral system to the extent that by observing and fulfilling this virtue, one is able to achieve and perform other moral virtues.[20]

To implement the first goal or consequence, Kāshānī argues that the ultimate stage of human perfection is nearness to God (*qurb*) (MB, VIII, 26, 39, 66). To achieve this final end, man must promote himself by the virtue of love of God (MB, VIII, 39, 66, 68). This virtue is obtainable only through the attainment of two means: knowledge (*ma`rifah*) and action (*`amal*) (MB, VIII, 45; HM, 166). By *ma`rifah*, he means the knowledge that man needs in achieving the ultimate perfection (*qurb*). Man's increasing knowledge of the attributes and perfection of the object of his love, i.e. God, advances him towards more intense and exalted levels of love (MB, VIII, 16, 39-40). As he ascends to higher levels of love, man advances towards greater perfection (MB, VIII, 51).

By *`amal*, Kāshānī means the actions and behaviors man has to perform to purify himself from sins and vices and to prepare himself for receiving a pure love. If we don't cleanse our souls and hearts from all worldly loves, Kāshānī argues, we may not be able to achieve the virtue of love of God (MB, VIII, 45).

With almost the same vocabulary and strength of argumentation, Malebranche likewise seeks these two fundamental consequences from his theory of love of God. With respect to the first goal, Malebranche, like Kāshānī, argues that man seeks and wills happiness and perfection (TE, 64). God, as the only Cause and Creator, can effect man's happiness and perfection. Thus, by being mindful of God's Power and Goodness, man desires to approach God and unite with Him (TE, 64). Finally, the love of God is the only path through which man can unite with Him (TE, 64). As we have seen before and as is obvious from his metaphysical doctrine, Malebranche insists that in this process it is God who makes man desire, wish, will and love. He

says, "certainly man sees only because God enlightens him. He wills only because God animates him or makes him love" (TE, 64). If we ask Malebranche the role of man would be in this process, he would clearly explain that "since God alone is the cause of our pleasure, we ought to subject ourselves to His law and work for our perfection, leaving it to His justice and goodness to proportion our happiness to our merits" (TE, 222).

Therefore, I think the extent of will's role is the main difference between Kāshānī and Malebranche in their first expectation of the theory of love of God. This difference refers to their metaphysically different approaches to the role of human will in the process of perfection, in particular, and in all moral activities and behaviors, in general. For Kāshānī, man is free to willingly choose the path of perfection or imperfection. This free will, according to Kāshānī, does not contradict with the God's Will, since God Wills and Wants man to choose and act freely. However, as we have seen before, the story completely differs for Malebranche. God is the only Cause and He wants man to see, will, wish, feel, desire, know and act (TE, 64-65, 149). Malebranche insists that "Man ought to want to do what God wants, since man is able to do only what God does" (TE, 150). Consequently, man "ought to submit and subject himself to God's law and Divine Will" (TE, 49, 221). Still, one may ask whether man is free to submit and subject himself to God's law or it is once again God who makes man submit and subject himself? Who is the subject of 'ought'? Man or God? If the subject is man, is he free to follow or deny this 'ought'?

With respect to the second goal or consequence, Kāshānī argues that the virtue of love of God plays the main role in the whole virtue-based moral system. He explains that through the process of the fulfillment of this virtue, one must purify his heart and soul from all vices (MB, VIII, 45). Hence, love of God motivates man to purify himself from sins and moral vices. This purification then helps him to first achieve other moral virtues and, secondly, to be prepared for

receiving and promoting the main virtue, love of God (MB, VIII, 26). Therefore, according to Kāshānī, the virtue of love of God has a dual function in the formation and maintenance of the whole moral system: achieving the love of God necessitates the purification of the heart from all moral vices; and the love of God as the ultimate goal of morality, demands other moral virtues (MB, VIII, 69-70). It goes without saying that both knowledge and action perform crucial roles in this process (MB, VIII, 45).

Malebranche, on the other hand, argues that the virtue of love of God, as the virtue of virtues, the universal virtue, and the fundamental virtue (TE, 49), makes us just and perfect, and will one day make us happy (TE, 49). Love as the unique virtue and the principal of the moral virtues, not only makes the habits or dispositions of minds virtuous (TE, 53), but also transforms the lover according to the object of his love; the One who makes all our felicity (TE, 105). Therefore, by love and through the love of God, man is able to formulate his moral virtues and distinguish good things and actions from evils.

When we compare our two thinkers at this stage, we recognize their sameness more than their differences. Both expect the virtue of love of God to be the principal virtue which shapes other moral virtues and directs them into an appropriate situation. Therefore, it appears that they have attempted to construct their entire moral systems on this virtue and employ it to justify certain related issues: first, they justify the God-man relationship and its position in the moral system; secondly, they justify and demonstrate God is the main goal and ultimate end for their morality, as well as the core of God in their whole moral system; thirdly, they justify and present their intuitive experiences regarding certain features of love of God in a systematic elaboration. I think that both thinkers were successful in achieving these three consequences.

In our exposition here, certain fundamental questions do arise about the two thinkers' elaboration of the relationship between virtue

and happiness. What is this happiness? Is it the same as perfection? Is it attainable by us? If yes, how?

What we learn from the two thinkers is the fact that ultimate perfection is logically and practically attainable. However, there are certain interpretations for the ultimate perfection. In the minds of the philosophers of Greece, it was: that the order of the whole of existing things should be inscribed in our souls. Then this conception was afterwards absorbed into the Islamic and Christian tradition in the conception of the beatific and Divine vision: 'What do they not see, who see him who sees all things?'"

Happiness, which is called *eudaimonia* in the Aristotelian language, and perfection are the two key words used by both thinkers in their moral systems. What do they mean by happiness and perfection? Do they share the same perception of these two terms? If so, do they employ these terms in a way that would justify with their application of the term `love of God` as the main virtue in the whole moral systems? And finally, to what degree do they determine happiness as a (the) final end, and how do they interpret it? These are some concerns that I would like to expose in this comparative study.

For Kāshānī, nearness to Allah (God), and the eternal gazing upon His Glorious countenance embodies eminent happiness. The pleasure of the vision of God or encounter with Him is the highest happiness, the ultimate good and the last of all forms of God's bounty. This can be realized through the highest level of achieving the *virtue of love of God*. Therefore, perfection, which comes through this *virtue*, is the same as nearness (*qurb*) to Allah.[21]

For Malebranche, happiness equals perfection, which is attainable through the love of God. Thanks to his epistemology, Malebranche, as we have seen in chapter 3, sees everything in God and through God. God is the only Perfect Being, and to achieve perfection, one has to draw closer to Him, love Him and finally be united with Him.

When we compare these two passages we observe that for both thinkers, achieving happiness equals achieving perfection and vice versa. Furthermore, they both acknowledge God as the only Perfect Being. Both htinkers believe that perfection is possible and achievable only by drawing closer to Him (*qurb*), loving Him, and gazing upon Him. Kāshānī stops here, but Malebranche goes further and adds, "finally uniting with Him." If we correctly understand these features from our thinkers, we may conclude that they have reached almost the same point in their moral system despite of their different theological backgrounds.

At this juncture, I would like to elucidate and illustrate our thinkers' perception of the supreme moral pleasure. To achieve this supreme pleasure which comes through perfection and union, there are certain reasoning and argumentation; one of which has been presented by Misbah Yazdi, which I prefer to examine here as the last, but not the least, concluding remark.

I agree with Misbah Yazdi when he demonstrates that "we may designate three degrees for human affection and inclination in terms of intensity and weakness: First, the weak status which requires proximity to the beloved under normal conditions. This does not involve any sacrifice and selflessness. Second, the average status which in addition to the desire for proximity, requires sacrifice in the way of the beloved to the extent that it does not interrupt general and basic personal interests. Third, the status of captivation and selflessness when the lover does not refrain from any sacrifice in the way of the beloved. Hence, the lover regards the peak of enjoyment to be following the will of beloved, and subjecting himself to perdition for the sake of the beloved. This status is signified by the taking of pleasure in expressing humility and homage to the beloved. Another sign of it is that the lover gives unconditional precedence to the will of the beloved over that of other beings and other objects."[22]

It goes without saying that the greater the love for something, the greater will be the enjoyment experienced in reaching it. On the

other hand, intensity of enjoyment hinges on the degree of desirability and the existential value of the beloved. Therefore, if a person develops the strongest form of love towards the most precious of all beings and realizes that being's existential merit, he will experience the greatest enjoyment when he is united with that beloved. In case this act of being united is not confined to time, place and other limiting conditions, and if it is possible at every time place this desire will be completely fulfilled. As a result, the infinite direction of this desire is in a burning love for an infinitely beautiful and perfect beloved who has the strongest existential ties with man and whom man can find himself living and dying for. In this manner, he will reach true union and no factor can separate him from his beloved. To the contrary, for a being that does not possess these conditions love cannot fully satisfy this desire, and will always be coupled with disappointment, defeat, separation, disunion, etc.

To my knowledge, a thorough comparison between Malebranche and Kāshānī has yet to be presented, despite much need in light of the recent interest in the Christian and Muslim dialogue. While they are similar in background and even on some points of philosophy, there is a distinct difference in their frame of reference as to the knowledge of God, as well as the love for God. Time and again the issue of knowing God and loving God is used to link these two great philosophers. The phrases "know God" and "love God" are also very related in their frame of reference. We may conclude that, in their interpretation of human perfection and good life, both thinkers have highly relied on the two basic elements of knowledge and love. Of course they share in the perception that, for the achievement of a good life and ultimate perfection, these two elements must be theoretically and practically determined in the realm of divinity.[23]

One of the critical areas in which our two thinkers should be clearly understood and compared is the relation of the will to the process of understanding. How do they face this problem and which validity will be credited to their resolution? How do they respond to

whether understanding or knowledge has a logical priority over will or vice versa? We may find in both traditions of Islam and Christianity, a critical approach to the question of the relation between knowledge and will or intellect and will, which has been historically taken into account by major religious thinkers.

In Kāshānī's case, we have a historical development in a controversial account that has been represented by two main lines of theological partners, i.e. *Mu`tazilits* and *Ash`arits*.[24] The controversy definitely raised interest in the relation of will and intellect within the Divine nature. This issue was important in determination of whether God could or could not be conceived to possess an absolutely free will. The absolute free will in God refers to whether God's actions are determined by rational considerations, or whether truth and error, right and wrong, are arbitrary distinctions based upon the unregulated fiat of God's Will.

For Kāshānī, knowledge and will are not distinct identities attributed to the Essence of God. However, God's activity could be rationalized in a way that allows us, for instance, to the rational codes to Divine actions. In this respect, there would be no conflict between God's Will and Knowledge.[25] This is what Kāshānī along with his master, Mullā Sadrā , understood from the Holy Qurān where it says:

When He (Allah) wants anything, His Command to it is "Be" and it is. [26]

In Malebranche's case we may find the same historical story. As Davies remarks, this question has divided later Scholasticism into two opposed schools. In one sense, Davies continues, the controversy between the Thomists and the Scotists was a rivalry between the Dominican and Franciscan orders respectively.[27] Likewise, for them the main question was about the relation of will and intellect within the Divine Nature. Davies states that Aquinas held against the Scotus the more ancient doctrine that intellect is supreme and God's Will is determined by His Reason.[28]

Malebranche responds to the issue of the relation of will to understanding, as Davies explains, by stating that will and understanding are not coordinate faculties of the soul; rather, understanding has a logical priority to will. Therefore, Malebranche acknowledged the dominant Thomistic doctrine that officially became the position of the Catholic Church. It is not unexpected to see Malebranche following the steps of his predecessors such as Aquinas and Descartes in this regard. However, it is remarkable and significant to see how Malebranche shows that the Cartesian doctrine was in agreement with the position sanctioned by the Church.[29]

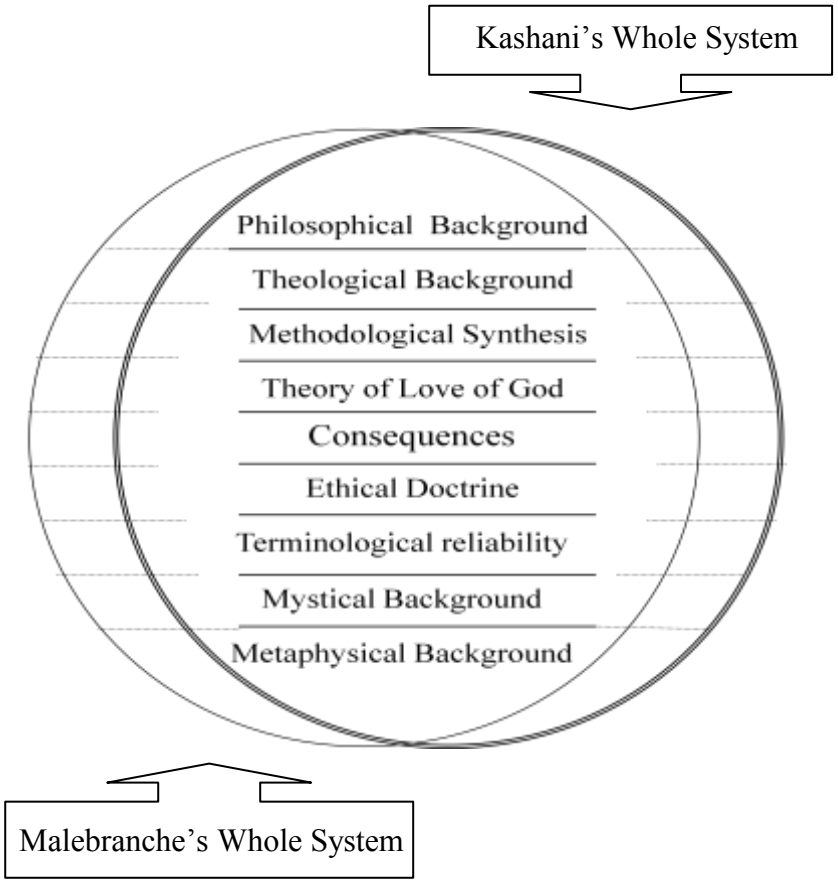
One of the most incisive criticisms that Malebranche received during his lifetime and even after his death involved the issue of human will and the extent of its application in the process of man's perfection.[30] In his cosmology, Malebranche, as we have already seen, maintains that God is the only real Cause in the universe. Any single action, movement, reflection, feeling and so on, has been caused and determined directly by God. There is no authoritative role for man's will even in his own movements and decisions. Based on this metaphysical ontology, Malebranche has been facing a two-fold dilemma. On the one hand, he has to offer a logical construction for a subjective explanation of the relationship of freedom and causality. On the other hand, if humans are dependent on the Divine causality for receiving any kind of emotion, desire, feeling and love, how can they legitimately be held personally responsible for their destiny and ultimate end? But if they are not thus dependent – if they are personally responsible – how can Malebranche's doctrine of occasionalism and Divine Omnipotence be true? Is Malebranche prepared to place limits on the Divine Will and Divine causality in order to make room for man's will; even as an indirect cause for his own decisions and will?

Is it helpful or adequate for Malebranche to answer to these questions by believing in the mystery of Divine Being, Divine Creation and Redemption? Or is it methodologically acceptable from

Malebranche to rely on a metaphorical vocabulary to convey the transcendental dimension of his metaphysical doctrine? Fortunately, Malebranche himself was aware of these critical problems and attempted to deal with them and moderately resolve them. First of all, in my understanding, Malebranche didn't see any need to shift from the ordinary language into a metaphorical vocabulary in order to demonstrate his examination of the controversial relation between God's Will and the human will. The final answer Malebranche has attempted to present here is that "Man ought to want to do what God wants, since man is able to do only what God does" (TE, 150). Hence, man "ought to submit and subject himself to God's law and Divine Will" (TE, 49, 221). On the other hand, for Malebranche, God is not blameworthy because He acts as a general cause in the realm of grace and nature. Hence, the doctrine of occasionalism and the Cartesian ontology would be saved, but the notion of freedom, which seems to turn man into a true cause, would be limited and recognized as self-determination to the extent that man is totally dependent on God.

However, as we explained before, this could not justify the human free will or man's responsibility for his actions. We may ask whether man is free to submit and subject himself to God's law or it is once again God who makes man submit and subject himself to the Divine law?

In our comparative survey of similarities within differences and differences within similarities, one may conclude that, with respect to background, methodology, doctrine and consequences – our two thinkers are more similar in some stages and more divided and separated in others. The following diagram may somewhat illustrate our comparative study:



Each circle represents every thinker's entire system. As we see, they share in almost all areas, but the more we move to the center, the more similarities and sameness we observe. In other words, they have less sameness in backgrounds and more similarities in consequences.

We may examine Yearley's proposal in the process of analogical reasoning here. Yearley identifies three types of theories in the thought of a religious thinker or culture: *primary theories*, which provide naturalistic explanations of daily events; *secondary theories*, which invoke metaphysical and non-experimental entities to explain

troubling or puzzling occurrences; and *practical theories,* which guide people in action and choice. However, in our case, and also in other cases, as Yearley himself admits, the three types of theories are interwoven in many ways. It is not easy to separate our thinkers' practical theories about moral virtue and love of God from their metaphysical and cosmological background. It is also obvious that the practical theories of our cases do utilize metaphysical and religious concepts from the secondary theories. Therefore, Yearley's proposal might be applicable here at the theoretical level, but on a practical level we find a substantial measure of consensus. However, we may find some differences between the two thinkers, at the secondary level, which is the theoretical one.

Although it is too difficult to separate the practical theories from the one's metaphysical background, as Nussbaum remarks in her criticism of Yearley,[31] it is logical and reasonable for an outsider to consider the similar-level theories in his comparative approach to certain thinkers or cultures. They may observe differences in one level but similarities in another. In our case, for instance, when we compare Kāshānī and Malebranche's metaphysical concerns, we see some areas of mostly differences such as the theories of vision, causality, and the God-man relationship. However, our thinkers are very similar in their practical theories. They both understand and interpret the issue of love of God as a moral virtue. They both determine this virtue as the core virtue in their whole moral system. And finally, they both interpret the virtue of love of God as the principle means for the process of human perfection.

Finally, I hope that this research has illustrated, both in approach and in results, the relevance of doing the kind of comparative philosophy of religions in which we compare ideals of human excellence. I expect that this study created elucidating interpretative descriptions of each thinker and the relationships between them; presented some constructive conclusions about the theories of virtue and analyses of particular virtues such as love of God, and

demonstrated the significance of comparing thinkers who spring from different religions and cultures. I think that the latter result has the most general applicability and therefore is the most important. By this kind of cross-cultural and cross-religious analysis we will be able to develop those abilities that allow us to compare different visions of the world; and we must engage in the normative analysis that such comparisons involve if we are to survive in the present world where we often encounter thoroughly diverse views and different opinions of human flourishing. The kind of inquiry and engagement such as our comparison of Kāshānī and Malebranche helps us to meet the challenges and opportunities of our day. Therefore, this study rests on the belief that we need a scholarly set of intellectual skills and abilities to do the comparative analysis of human flourishing. However, to acquire these abilities is critical if we are to meet the historical, cultural, and religious challenges that we face today.

Notes:

[1] Lee H. Yearley, *Mencius and Aquinas: Theories of Virtue and Conceptions of Courage*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990.

[2] Many years before Malebranche, Thomas Aquinas, preserving the pattern and most of the detail of Aristotle's ethics, maintained that Aristotle's theory is grievously

incomplete. Aquinas adds that Aristotle's theory is incapable of completion without drawing on Christian insight. See Ethel Albert, *Great Traditions in Ethics* (Belmont, California: Wadsworth, Inc., 1988), p. 108.

[3] Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, 8. 7. 1159a 3-4. See also Isidor Schneider (ed.), *The World of Love* (New York, 1964), vol I, pp. 56-65. It seems that for Aristotle, like other philosophers who followed him, love is not categorized as a virtue; it is regarded as a passion. See Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 2. 4. 1380b-1381b.

[4] See J. B. Schneewind, *Moral Philosophy from Montaigne to Kant* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), vol. I, p. 257.

[5] In Kāshānī's major work on ethics, i.e. MB, Kāshānī has attempted to revive the Ghazālī's main work on ethics, *Ihyā` `Ulum al-Din*, accepting Ghazālī's style, methodology, and doctrine. See Kāshānī's Introduction to his MB, vol. 1, pp. 1-7.

[6] We may obviously find this tradition-based methodology in most, if not all, of Kāshānī's works. For instance, Kāshānī, at the very beginning of every chapter or new subject, first mentions and explores the related Qurānic verses and Prophetic traditions. This method could be found in his major works in ethics like *al-Mahajjah* and *al-Haqā`iq*.

[7] See J. B. Schneewind, *Moral Philosophy from Montaigne to Kant* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), vol. I, p. 258.

[8] On Kāshānī, see his *al-Mahajjah*, vol VIII, pp. 46, 54, 77; on Malebranche, see his Treatise on Ethics, pp. 54-55.

[9] Malebranche, ST, Chapter 5.

[10] There is a very similar, but more secular approach to the definition of love in the language of some of recent writers. In this respect, Bertrand Russell argues that "Love as an emotion moves between two poles: on one side, pure delight in contemplation; on the other, pure benevolence." See B. Russell, *Why I Am Not a Christian* (New York: A Touchstone Book, 1957), p. 57.

[11] Malebranche has dedicated one full chapter to the explanation and requirements of the first kind of love (TE, II/7, 173-180), and another full chapter to the second and third kinds of love (TE, II/8, 181-186).

[12] Kāshānī, MB, vol. 8, pp. 9-15.

[13] Kāshānī, MB, vol. 8, pp. 16-27. On Ghazālī's point of view, see Abul Quasem, *The Ethics of al-Ghazālī* (Selangor, Malaysia, 1975), pp. 182-183.

[14] On Ishraqi examination of the concept of light in their philosophy, see Hossein Ziai, The Illuminationist Tradition," in S. H. Nasr, (ed.), *History of Islamic Philosophy* (New York, 1996), vol. 1, pp. 465-496. See also S. H. Nasr, "Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi Maqtul," in M. M. Sharif (ed.), *A History of Muslim Philosophy* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1963), vol. I, pp. 372-398.

[15] In chapter 2, where we considered Kāshānī's life and thought, I highlighted the theosophical synthesis of Kāshānī's master, Mullā Sadrā. I explained there that, in his metaphysical thought Kāshānī is highly influenced by his master's theosophy.

[16] See Kāshānī, KM, pp. 19-23, UM, pp. 24-28, 30-37; MB, vol. 8, pp. 22-24.

[17] Malebranche, ST, Book 3, part. 2, chapter 6.

[18] Malebranche, ST, Book 6, part. 2, chapter 3.

[19] On a full account of Aristotle's theory of relationship between virtue and happiness, see Stanley Hauerwas and Charles Pinches, *Christians Among the Virtues: Theological Conversations with Ancient and Modern Ethics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), chapter one.

[20] For Kāshānī's approach to the above mentioned goals you may see, for example, his *al-Mahajjah*, vol. VI, pp. 121-123; VIII, pp. 37-40; *al-Haqā`iq*, pp. 166, 181. For his approach to the consequences, see *al-Mahajjah*, vol. VIII, pp. 25-26, 43-45,68-70, 78; *al-Haqā`iq*, pp. 59, 186.

[21] In several places, Kāshānī discusses the issue of nearness to God (*qurb*), gazing on God (*ru`yah* or *mushāhadah*), and human perfection (*kamāli insāni*). For instance, see KM, pp. 2-6, 89-90, 109-114, 154-157; HM, pp. 178-180; MB, vol. 6, pp. 121-124; vol. 8, pp. 27-42.

[22] See Misbah Yazdi, *Self-Recognition for Self-Improvement*, English trans. by Muzhgan Jalali (Tehran: Islamic Propagation Organization, 1992), p. 45.

[23] It is interesting to mention that in a more recent approach, the two elements, i.e. knowledge and love, have been considered as the fundamental grounds for the good life, even in a non-Divine context. In this regard, Bertrand Russell says: "The good life is one inspired by love and guided by knowledge." He continues that "neither love without knowledge nor knowledge without love can produce a good life." See B. Russell, *Why I Am Not a Christian* (New York: A Touchstone Book, 1957), p. 56.

[24] On the historical development of Islamic theology through the two lines, see Majid Fakhry, *Ethical Theories in Islam* (Netherlands, 1991), pp. 31-58. For a recent account of the discussion of and the debate between these two lines of Islamic theology, see Richard M. Frank, "Moral Obligation in classical Muslim theology," *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, vol. 11, no. 2, pp. 204-223. For more detailed examination about the two theological schools in general, see George Hourani, "Two theories of values in medieval Islam," *Muslim World*, no. 50 (1960), pp. 269-287.

[25] See Kāshānī, KM, pp. 55-62.

[26] The Holy Qurān, chapter 36, verse 82.

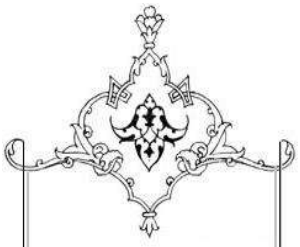
[27] See Arthur Ernest Davies, "Some Factors of Malebranche's Theory of Knowledge," *The Philosophical Review*, vol. 33, Issue 5 (Sep., 1924), p. 484.

[28] *Ibid*.

[29] For more details in this respect, see Arthur Ernest Davies, "Some Factors of Malebranche's Theory of Knowledge," *The Philosophical Review*, vol. 33, Issue 5 (Sep., 1924), p. 484.

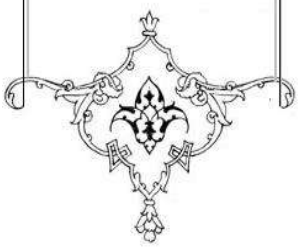
[30] Actually the problem has been primarily raised in the discussion of original sin and human salvation. It was initially questioned whether human being is responsible for his misdeeds? However, the same problem and dilemma is conceivable in our discussion of human perfection as well.

[31] See Martha Nussbaum, "Comparing Virtues," *Journal of Religious Ethics*, vol. 21, no. 2 (Fall 1993), p. 356.



CHAPTER SEVEN

Conclusion



CHAPTER 7

Conclusion

The concept of love and its related issues have been approached within the context of intellectual, social, psychological, mystical and legal domains. Thus, the notion of love has been theoretically and practically developed throughout the history.

In this research, however, the concept of love, and principally love of God, has been critically analyzed and comparatively scrutinized within the context of moral discipline. There are some theoretical gratifications and practical fulfillments for this particular examination, that promote both love and morality.

First: love moves from theory to practice, and from passion to action. It is logically possible to restrict our reflection within the realm of passion and psycho-biological features. However, when we approach it within the context of moral conduct and ethical experience, love achieves the advantage of having been practiced in a factual life. In other words, the notion of love, in the field of morality, is not merely a theoretical, romantic passion, but rather an authentic, advancing attainment.

Second: love links the human destiny, man's final end and ultimate human perfection. As we have seen so far, our two thinkers have attempted to justify and strengthen the role of love in the process of human perfection. Now, love as the best or even the only means, enables man shape his destination and achieve perfection. Hence, the methodology of spiritual progression is a dynamic one. That is, love

speaks about a point of departure, a destination, and the stages and stations which the lover must traverse in their correct order to arrive at the final destination.

In this approach, the path before man is actual and not in the least a metaphor; and this path must be followed stage by stage and station by station. Thus, in this view, the human soul is a living organism, like a child or seedling, whose perfection lies in growth and maturation which follows a particular system and order.

Third: love directs human life in a moral, virtuous, and admirable direction. Both thinkers tried to illuminate that love of God, as the main, unique and fundamental virtue, makes or shapes other moral virtues. It promotes and develops man towards a moralistic and noble individual and collective life. Within this disciplinary framework, the virtue of love of God would structure moral duties and define the human relationship with himself, with the universe and eminently with God.

Fourth: love promotes humanity toward an aesthetic ethics. Love links art, morals, aesthetics and ethics. As has been argued by some contemporary moralists, the ethical problem is how unite with the good without illusion or fantasy; for right action and freedom are possible on the basis of our prior attention to the Good. Hence, only love can effect such a union with the good.[1] This aesthetic unification may find expression through certain visual and linguistic expressions.

Poetry, for example, has been traditionally and historically employed by mystics and others to exhibit the virtuous feature of moral conduct by an aesthetic technique. By mentioning some Muslim, mystic poets such as ‘Attar, Jalaluddin Rumi and Jami, whose works are partially accessible in English and other European languages, Nicholson confirms that “to translate these wonderful hymns is to break their melody and bring their soaring passion down to earth, but not even a prose translation can quite conceal the love of Truth and the vision of Beauty which inspired them.”[2]

This technique, besides other aesthetic techniques, has been frequently used by both Muslim and Christian Mystics, Poets, Sufis (in case of Muslims), and others for the presentation of their intuitive acknowledgement of pivotal and unique role of love for God in attaining the final perfection.

Another significant consequence of studying love in the context of morality is the glorious synthesis of three primary disciplines, i.e. philosophy, mysticism, and morality. Notably, in the process of human perfection, the major developmental steps of knowledge, love and action should be profoundly taken in orderly. Each of these requires its own intellectual discipline, namely philosophy, mysticism, and morality.

The philosophical discipline will supply an appropriate knowledge for reflection. The mystical discipline helps to cultivate the love that promotes and directs man towards Good. Finally, the moral discipline will help us fulfill an efficacious action for perfection.

To conclude our analytical and critical study so far, I would like to make a synthesis of my understanding of the two thinkers' similar consequences and my own anticipation of the theory of love God, and present it in the following disciplinary framework. I call this concluding presentation the 'Doctrine of Love.'

Doctrine of Love

The doctrine of love is based on the division of love into physical and metaphysical love. Alternatively, we may call physical love a worldly love and metaphysical love a transcendental love. These two kinds of love are totally different and oppose one another. They are different in their nature, cause, motive and end. They are surprisingly not different in, but rather share objects and language.

Physical love is a worldly, natural desire caused by physical or material aspiration. This love is naturally derived from and based on a limited predicament, requiring and seeking a temporary goal. Its ultimate end is limited to and bounded by this material and physical world. It is characterized as a non-moral temperament which deserves an unti-virtuous, not non-virtuous characteristic. Hence, this kind of love is identified as an authentic root of human sins and moral vices.

Metaphysical love, conversely, is a transcendental, supernatural desire caused by a spiritual aspiration. This love is essentially derived from and directed toward an unlimited status, which demands and seeks a permanent goal. Its ultimate goal is beyond the material and physical world, and rests with a developmental, human perfection. It is characterized as a moral attitude that deserves a virtuous essence. Therefore, this kind of love is identified as an authentic ground for human excellence and moral virtues.

Surprisingly, the objects of both physical and metaphysical love, are the same. It is remarkable to mention that the most critical part of the doctrine is this part. All kinds of love offered and discussed by moralists and theologians, including our two thinkers, can be placed under the umbrella of either of the two kinds of love.

In another words, love of God, for example, can be motivated and experienced as a physical love or as a metaphysical love. In the case of physical love, the subject naturally desires a limited, worldly and immoral inclination. Here, man loves God, not for God's sake, but for the sake of his own material, worldly and vicious egocentrism.

Therefore, love of God here is not a Divine moral virtue; rather it is a means to procure a worldly, amoral accomplishment. In the case of metaphysical love, in the example of love of God, the subject's supernatural desire is toward an unlimited, heavenly, spiritual inclination. Man loves God for God's sake, not for an egotistic, worldly aspiration.

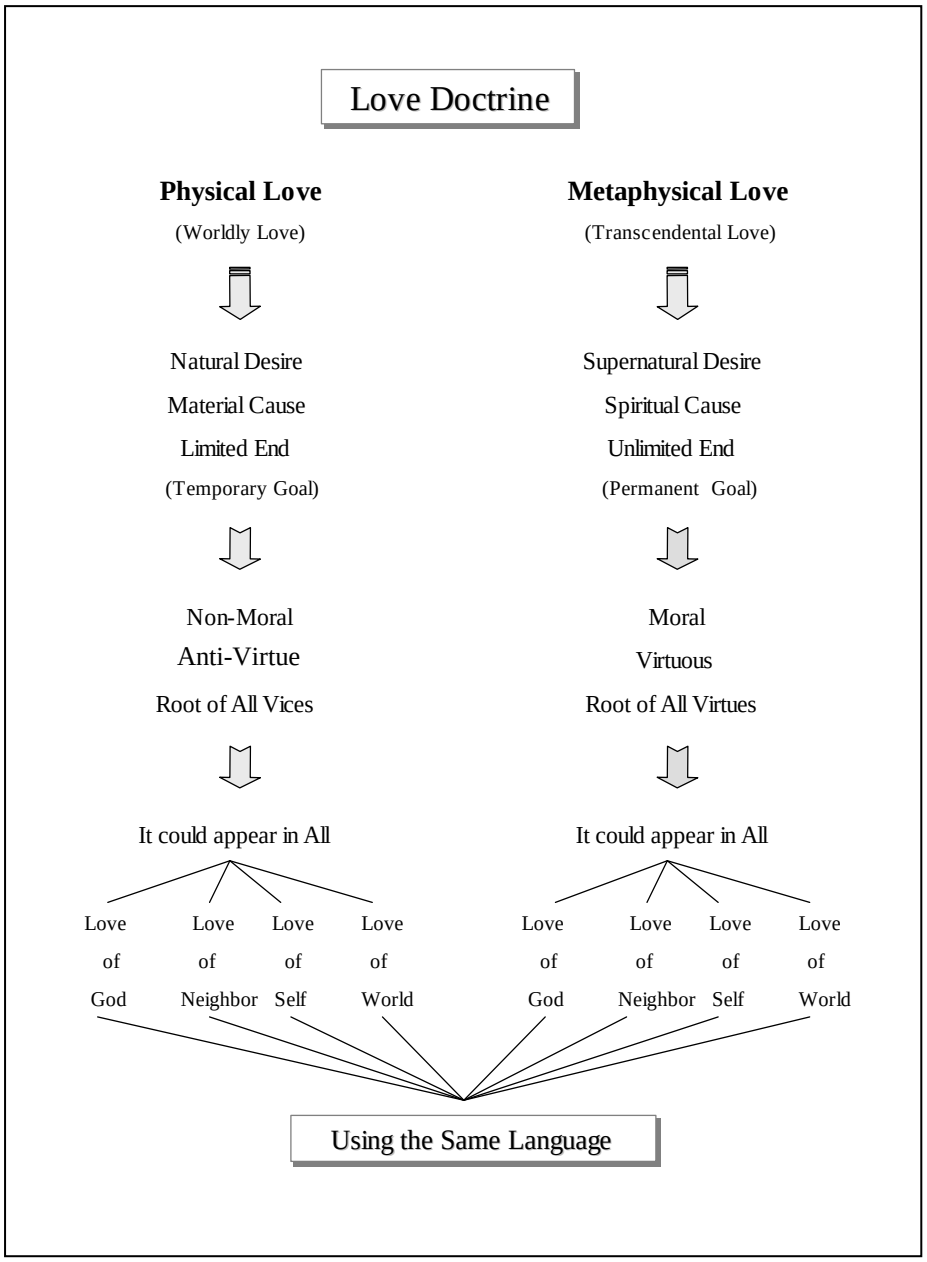
Hence, love of God, in this case, is an admired, moral virtue, which functions as a fundamental ground for all human righteousness and moral virtues, and directs him towards his ultimate perfection.

With respect to the linguistic phenomena of the doctrine of love, there would be another critical surprise. The fact is that there is no difference between the terminology used for the physical and metaphysical loves. There is no need, to my knowledge, to apply a metaphorical, symbolic, supernatural language for one, and a literal, experimental, and tangible language for the other.

The same terminology of love, including classical and modern with respect to the words, phrases, discourses, and expressions, could be applied for both loves. The only difference is the meaning, which has been inspired and conceived behind the applied linguistic utterances. The nature of this meaning and the way we convey it through the same language determine the type of love we anticipate in our examination.

Hence, I don't see any room for certain critical linguistic approaches to the issue of love, which has been taken seriously by recent moralists and theologians, in their recognition of the religious terminological application.

The following diagram is helpful for a general comparison between the two kinds of love, with regard to the certain features we observe in the doctrine of love:


Love Doctrine
Physical Love
(Worldly Love)
Natural Desire
Material Cause
Limited End
(Temporary Goal)
Non-Moral
Anti-Virtue
Root of All Vices
It could appear in All
Love of God
Love of Neighbor
Love of Self
Love of World
Metaphysical Love
(Transcendental Love)
Supernatural Desire
Spiritual Cause
Unlimited End
(Permanent Goal)
Moral
Virtuous
Root of All Virtues
It could appear in All
Love of God
Love of Neighbor
Love of Self
Love of World
Using the Same Language

In this doctrine, the unity and conflict between the certain kinds of love deserve a special meaning and application. First of all, there is a unity among, and no conflict between, all kinds of love classified under either the physical or metaphysical love. Secondly, there is a deep conflict between each form of love from the physical-love category with every form of love from the metaphysical-love category. For instance, there is no conflict between love of God and love of self when they are classified under one category. However, there would be a very serious conflict when we compare love of God from the metaphysical-love category, which is Divine, virtuous, and moral, with love of self from the physical-love category, which is selfishness, unti-virtue and amoral. The best statement that I found from a Western thinker, that somehow harmonizes with the above mentioned doctrine of love, quotes the Italian philosopher, Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499), who says:

> The human will can be disposed toward God chiefly in two ways. It desires either to receive from him or to give. The first instinct is common and natural to all, for we all desire many things from God, but we do not love God or man on this account… It is only the man who gives himself back to God, that is to say who turns every thought and action to Him, who truly loves God for God's sake alone and other things because of God…. Such spirits are moved with an ineffable love to God and to each other. To Him they give themselves spontaneously as to their Father; to others most gladly as to their brothers. Whatever else goes by the name of friendship among men is nothing but robbery. True charity, as Paul the Apostle says, seeks not its own good but that of the other.[3]

According to this doctrine, the difference between heavenly and earthly love, as well as their relationship, has been subjectively and objectively justified. Both loves take place in this world, but the inclined motivation and the ultimate objective differs in each one. In

heavenly love, man's motivation is a supernatural enthusiasm which leads him towards a transcendent object that is superior to this world. In earthly love, on the other hand, the main motivation is a material, temporal passion, which ultimately vanishes in this worldly life.

It is noteworthy that, according to this doctrine, there is a considerable difference between self-love and selfish-love; the former is positive and the latter is negative. The former is categorized under transcendental love, which is identified as the basis of all loves; whereas the latter is classified under the worldly love, that is ultimately tends to egoism and the eradication of everything else, including one's self.

Ultimately, we may, as a gracious conclusion or delighted fruit of the discussion, demonstrate that the outlook of the research renders God exceedingly loveable to the extent that it amends the misinterpretation of the fearful God presented by certain theological elaboration.[4] It is declared that, in modern times, the presentation of a terrifying God leads people either to turn away from God and deny or ignore His existence, or to continue to worship a terrifying God and avoid His condemnation and punishment.[5] However, if we delineate an authentic illustration of divinity, like what we have partially done here in this research, it will obviously promote people not only to improve their understanding of God, His attributes, and particularly His approach towards humanity, but also to acknowledge His Compassion and Love to the extent that they will be prepared to lovingly and willingly obey and worship Him.

Furthermore, we may expose the final presentation in another way. Perhaps, as Tinder anticipates, the heart of the modern crisis is that love has lost its real object.[6] Although love bears complexities, it has only one adequate object, that is God. In modern and postmodern times, we are frequently challenging the crisis everywhere; particularly in moral and political dimensions of social and cultural encounters. The convincing solution that our two thinkers proposed is called the 'love message' which cautions man not to love something or someone,

but to change the object of love. They share in one specific doctrine that the humanity should change the object of its love and find the real object to love.

As a matter of historical fact, this is the summons of all world religions that we hear from these two thinkers; that if we love God appropriately, we would be able to instruct and determine our virtuous conducts not only to achieve our ultimate end and happiness, but also to settle our daily life and worldly affairs. This shareness and sameness we hear and see here from the two religion-oriented thinkers reveals, one of the best and most important results of our cross-religious and cross-cultural inquiry in this research. This comparative study of the two thinkers has potential to shed light not only on the philosophical concept of virtue but also to foster on a better understanding of the two faiths in the field of ethics. This study also illuminates a new avenue of inquiry into virtue theory and interreligious dialogue in the field of ethics, moral excellence and human perfection.

We may approach the result of our thinkers' scholarly contributions in the context of the recent critical examination of the theory of virtue. At the outset of the second section of their book, Hauerwas and Pinches remind us that they have "no stake in defending virtue as a thing in itself." Indeed, for the Christian, to defend virtue in that way may result in defending what is vicious. Examining the work of Alasdair MacIntyre, the authors echo one of MacIntyre's famous titles and insists: "If someone asserts that striving after virtue will bring one closer to God, Christians are obliged to ask: what virtues? and which God?"[7] As a result of this research, I would say that the unanimous respond from our two thinkers would clearly be that 'the virtue of love of God, and the God who loves and is beloved.'

Finally, I would like to close with a *hadīth* (tradition) of Imam 'Ali, may peace be upon him, wherein he states:

> Most certainly the best and most delightful of things in Paradise is the love of God and love for the sake of God

and the glorification of God. God, the Almighty and the Glorious, says "And the last of their cry shall be: 'Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds."[8]

Notes:

[1] See Stanley Hauerwas, *Vision and Virtue: Essays in Christian Ethical Reflection* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), pp. 38-39.

[2] See Reynold A. Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam* (London, 1914) p. 106.

[3] I am quoting this passage from James A. Devereux, "The Object of Love in Ficino's Philosophy," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 30, Issue 2 (Aril-June, 1969), p. 168. Charles Nelson believes that "for all Ficino's desire to reconcile Platonism with Christianity, his concept of love is basically platonic." See Nelson, *Renaissance Theory of Love* (New York, 1958), p. 83.

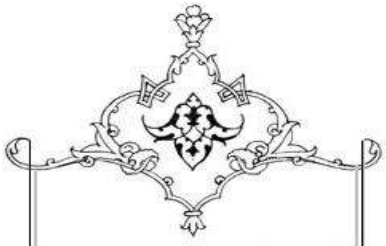
[4] As Anders Nygren explains, some Christian theologians have rejected both the Platonic eros or longing, and egocentric love, in which Christian gnostics saw the path to salvation. For them it is neither eros nor the agape motif can effectively bind man to God, but only the fear of punishment and the hope of reward can do that. See Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, English trans. by Philip S. Watson (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), pp. 252, 317-334, 343-348.

[5] For instance, Glen Tinder has explained the problem of misunderstanding of the theological issue of fear of God and its consequences in the modern time. See Glenn Tinder, "Augustine's World and Ours," *First Things*, no. 78 (December 1997), pp. 40-41.

[6] Glenn Tinder, "Augustine's World and Ours," *First Things*, no. 78 (December 1997), p. 42.

[7] See Stanley Hauerwas and Charles Pinches, *Christians Among the Virtues: Theological Conversations with Ancient and Modern Ethics*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998.

[8] The *hadīth* is in Majlisi, *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. LXVI, p. 251; the Ayah is in the Holy Qurān, Surah 10, verse 10.



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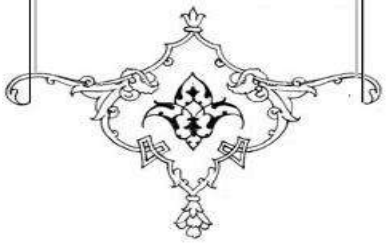

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IN THE NAME OF ALLAH

THE MOST BENEFICENT

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This book presents a comparative approach to the virtue of 'Love of God'; it is a mystical analysis based on Islamic and Christian moral theologies. This study provides an exposition and comparative analysis of Kashani's (1598-1680) and Malebranche's (1638-1715) conception of virtue, with particular attention paid to the role of love of God. One of the main goals of this research is to develop an understanding of the notion of love of God within the philosophical and mystical contexts of two different thinkers, each from a particular traditional horizon. This entails explicating each thinker's understanding of this concept within his specific line of thought in Islam or Christianity, and then situating his view within a broader philosophical and mystical perspective.

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Dr. S. M. R. HEJAZI

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